



PHD

An investigation into the extent to which schools use external evaluation information and its implications for their capacity to improve

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Award date:
2007

Awarding institution:
University of Bath

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An investigation into the extent to which schools use external evaluation information and its implications for their capacity to improve

Submitted by: Irit Diamant

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Education

July 2007

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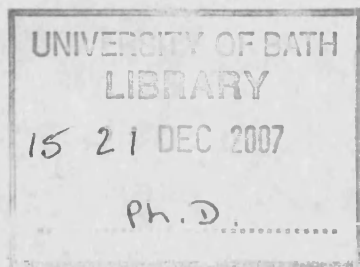
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In memory of my father

Acknowledgements

At the closure of this intellectual journey, it is with great pleasure and honour that I thank the many people who followed and assisted me in completing this challenging and demanding mission.

Thank you, my loved ones, my husband, Ilan, my sons, Iddo and Eldad and my daughter, Noga, for being with me, at my side, and for infusing me with your spirit, and your great trust in my ability. Thank you for your patience in dealing with the competing demands on my time required by this research and to responding to your needs.

Special thanks to my friend and mentor Dr. John Lazarus, for helping me to overcome language gaps, and whose insistence and drive provided an important catalyst to carrying out this research.

I would like to give special thanks to Dr. Felicity Wikeley and Prof. Louise Stoll for their systematic supervision; their support; their contribution in spirit and matter; their strict demands and fruitful questions; their great contribution to the research process and the final product. I also thank the staff from the University of Bath, and mainly the research student administrator, Mrs. Gill Brook-Taylor, for her quick and efficient response whenever needed.

Many thanks to the schools' staff for their hospitality, and full cooperation, for their precious time and for their openness.

And last but not least: my friends and colleagues – an enormous thank you for listening to me and for your empathy which enabled me to share moments of hardship and satisfaction; thank you for your personal involvement.

Abstract

The following thesis examines the multifaceted connections between external evaluation information and the processes undertaken in schools with the aim of school improvement.

Being a very complex concept, 'school improvement', in the context of this thesis, is examined through the lens of 'internal capacity for knowledge utilisation'.

A description of the Israeli educational context underpins the argument that there is a constant tension between control and autonomy. Ways to help schools to improve are constantly sought and state control mechanisms are being developed, including individual school evaluations carried out by the Ministry of Education¹. Each school's head teacher receives a report presenting its findings and is expected to use it in the best possible way.

Taking into account the potential usefulness of qualitative inquiry, four case studies were chosen to facilitate in-depth investigation with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the use they made of this knowledge and the implications this had for school improvement. The relationships between the school and the external source of information (the report) are carefully examined over a period of three years. This period thus incorporated three successive report cycles, which made it possible for this research to become a longitudinal study.

The study concludes that the different way in which each school makes use of the report's findings is not connected to the information itself; it rather reflects each school's culture and the interactive processes within it. It appears that, despite having reservations vis-à-vis the external evaluation procedure, the use of the report's findings becomes more thorough and sophisticated over time. Sophisticated use, the use that changes the school's culture, happens within a 'knowledge generating' community of learners. The required conditions for successful knowledge utilisation are the explicit outcome of the study. The implications for the school's capacity to improve are emphasised.

¹Recently this has changed. However, at the time of the collection of data for this research it was an integral part of the Ministry of Education.

Table of Content

Introduction	1
Israeli School Evaluation	1
Evaluation in education	3
Accountability.....	4
Democratisation and control	4
School improvement and teachers' professionalisation.....	5
Understanding and control.....	5
External and internal sources of evaluation.....	6
School self-evaluation	6
Schools' inspection and external evaluation of schools.....	8
Meytzav – an external evaluation scheme in Israel.....	10
Summary	14
Literature Review.....	16
Introduction.....	16
Knowledge Utilisation	16
Possible outcomes of a successful process of knowledge utilisation.....	19
School improvement	19
Building further the school's capacity for knowledge utilisation.....	21
Factors to take into account in a data-led approach	23
Possible influences on knowledge utilisation.....	27
The quality of the source of information	27
Aspects of the setting and the interactions among these.....	29
The external context – power and politics.....	48
Summary	54

Methodology	55
Introduction.....	55
The research paradigm.....	56
Incorporating case studies within a multiple study approach	58
Why multiple cases?	59
The quality of the research design.....	61
The place of the researcher.....	61
Issues of trustworthiness	63
Ethical considerations	65
The screening process – towards the four case study schools.....	67
Development of research instruments	70
Interviews.....	70
The questionnaire.....	72
Observations.....	74
School documents	76
The pilot process	76
The outcomes of the pilot	77
General conclusions of the pilot.....	78
The framework of analysis	79
Analysis of the documentation	80
The questionnaire.....	83
The observations	83

The Findings	85
The site of the research: School G.....	86
History and physical description.....	86
First impressions	87
The staff.....	89
External support	93
The reports.....	94
The site of the research: School M	110
History and physical description.....	110
First impressions	111
The Staff.....	112
The reports.....	117
The site of the research: School H.....	130
History and physical description.....	130
First impressions	131
The staff.....	132
The reports.....	136
The site of the research: School S	151
History and physical description.....	151
First impressions	152
The staff.....	153
External support	156
The reports.....	156

Discussion	175
From theory to practice – altering approaches in the process of carrying out the research	176
Perceptions regarding the quality of the source of information.....	180
Reactions to the external evaluation procedure – the data collection.....	181
Reactions to the report itself	182
Perceptions of the impact of the reports.....	183
Dissemination procedures.....	187
The effect of the school’s state of readiness	187
Summary	192
Aspects of the organisation that contribute to school’s capacity for knowledge utilisation.....	192
The culture of the schools.....	193
Leadership – perceptions and structures	195
Teachers’ learning at the schools.....	205
Conclusions and implications.....	212
Conditions that are required for conducting sophisticated knowledge utilisation at schools.....	213
General Conclusions	222
The longitudinal nature of the study	222
The use of the findings	222
The impact on schools	225
The issue of leadership and power	226
The issue of improvement	226
References	229

List of Appendices 250

Appendix no. 1: "Improvement through Inspection" – England, New Zealand and Israel.....	250
Appendix no. 2: Meytzav (examples).....	258
Appendix no. 3: A letter to head teachers	262
Appendix no. 4: The four case studies initial information.....	264
Appendix no. 5 First questionnaire for head teachers	266
Appendix no. 6: Head teacher semi-structured interview questions:	269
Appendix no. 7: Interviews.....	270
Appendix no. 8: Teacher's pilot questionnaire	278
Appendix no. 9 – A scheme for the second observation.....	284
Appendix no. 10 – Teacher's questionnaire last version.....	285
Appendix no. 11: SMTs' characteristics	292

List of Tables

Table no. 1	87
Table no. 2.....	118
Table no. 3	138
Table no. 4.....	159
Table no. 5.....	182
Table no. 6.....	198
Table no. 7.....	204
Table no. 8.....	215

Introduction

Israeli School Evaluation

In the 1990s the Israeli education system started to change, moving towards less centralisation and more self-government in schools. This fostered increased self-management of resources, a new emphasis on teacher development, and schools taking responsibility for developing and defining their own vision. Up to that point, the books published in the most part by the Ministry of Education had dictated what was, in effect, a national curriculum to be carried out by each school.

The call for less centralisation, with the greater autonomy given to schools, led to discussion among teachers about their educational vision and aims. At the same time, state control mechanisms developed, including state-controlled evaluation, and there remains a constant tension between centralization and decentralization, control and autonomy.

Until recently there has been no formal evaluation requirement in Israel's educational system, nor has there been any systematic mechanism for assessing schools on a regular basis; only sporadic attempts have been made to assess students' performance. There used to be a national test administered at the end of elementary school, primarily for selecting students for the various tracks of secondary education, but also used by the Ministry of Education for school evaluation. This test was abolished over 25 years ago with the reform of the educational system, when junior-high schools were created. These new schools admitted all elementary school graduates on a non-selective basis (Ministry, 1971). Since then, several sporadic attempts have been made to administer country-wide tests in certain grades of elementary school, especially in literacy and maths. Although the test results were not made public, the school itself received them and had to set its targets with reference to the results. This created controversy within the educational system and among the general public, and they were abolished. Currently the only national assessment is at the end of compulsory

schooling, i.e. when the student is 18. These examinations are administered by the Ministry of Education for students who wish to go to colleges and universities.

However, side by side with the current trend towards decentralization and school autonomy, there is a demand for more accountability gained through implementing national assessment and evaluation programs. The Israeli education system, which forms the context of this study, has been transformed time and again during the past ten to fifteen years. In Israel generally, and in the Israeli education system in particular, events take place rapidly, policies are switched and educational emphases shift. During these years, despite this pattern of swift change, there has been an ongoing increase in the central role of evaluation, in all its facets, within the education system.

Whereas until 1997 lone requests to be evaluated by the Department of Evaluation at the Ministry of Education came from local inspectors or experimental schools, in the last nine years several attempts have been made to widen the scope of evaluation. Initially it was done with a region-wide evaluation scheme, Madarom. In March 2000 this scheme was launched by the Evaluation Department at the Ministry of Education with the intention of its becoming a nation-wide evaluation. Its Hebrew name is Meytzav, which stands for Growth and Effectiveness Measures for Schools.

In the following research I examine processes that emerged from what was at the time a new evaluation scheme (Meytzav). My interest in this research originated from my work in the post I held in the Ministry's Evaluation Department, the department that carried out nation-wide evaluation processes.

The process of school evaluation that became mandatory nation-wide in 2001 takes a thorough look at the effectiveness of each school. The perceptions of pupils, teachers, and head teachers are all to an extent reflected in this evaluation process, but it highlights the tussle between decentralisation and centralisation, in that on the one side each school has to set up its own aims and priorities, while on the other the evaluation process represents an external, overall scheme of evaluation applied across the board. One of the drawbacks of the whole project is that while considerable

resources are being invested, nobody monitors to what extent the results in the evaluation report are taken up so as to improve practice in schools.

Researchers (Cullingford, 1999; Earley, 1998, 1996; Ferguson, 2000; Gray, 1995; Learmonth, 2000) have explored the extent to which inspections influence school improvement. Given that the external evaluation process conducted in Israel has certain features similar to the inspection process in other Western countries, the present research might provide a further, deeper resource for learning about the relationship between external evaluation and school's improvement.

The knowledge base which informs this study derives from two main roots: literature concerning evaluation in education and literature concerning school improvement. Before examining thoroughly the relevant literature on school improvement, a framework of the place of evaluation in education is offered, including ideas of external and internal sources of evaluation, their characteristics and liability. Then Meytzav, a specific external evaluation procedure, is described. The introductory part is concluded by highlighting the importance of knowledge utilisation within the framework of external evaluation of schools.

Evaluation in education

The need for evaluation of the educational process arises from the need of the schooling process to generate an effective response to changing social and economic conditions. School evaluation is one means of bridging the gap between what should be done and what is actually done.

Currently evaluation serves various needs at the school level. These are: accountability, democratisation and control, improvement and professionalism, and understanding and control. All needs are interrelated.

Accountability

The limitation of resources, the rising cost of educational expenditure and the growing influence of the mass media created the call for accountability in the '80s. Education as a public service is subject to public scrutiny. Consequently, questions regarding accountability and development have arisen, as MacBeath (1996) indicates, as well as questions of responsibility and control. One of the central issues in these questions is: Accountability to whom? Who, among the participants of the educational process, is to decide the criteria for effectiveness and accountability? Who will have control over the evaluation procedures? Who will be the audience of the findings, and who is going to implement the outcomes? According to Ernest House (1973), evaluation has become a political process; it is a motivated behaviour, always deriving from biased origins, either to defend or to attack something. Society requires those working in schools to justify the quality of education they provide and the efficiency with which they use public money. The place that evaluation takes in Western democratic societies might provide the answers to the above questions.

Democratisation and control

The democratisation of Western society and the developing concepts of the public right to know and the increase in public knowledge leads logically to the 'democratic model' of evaluation as MacDonald (1974) defines it. This model gives the participants in the institution being evaluated control over the use of information and, at the same time, turns the whole community into the audience of the findings. Furthermore, in some forms it gives those being evaluated the right to set up their own criteria for the evaluation. Simons (1987) adds to this point: while describing the democratic theory of evaluation, she also relates to the concept of control. Schools, according to Simons, should control the availability of self-reports to outside audiences, in the sense that they will decide about the timing, the confidence and the credibility. She argues that schools must have autonomy in order to demonstrate accountability. The way is to make people accountable for their own autonomy. Her argument is for quality control as the first stage in a gradual process of making information more accessible. The evaluation should be on process lines so as to allow schools to demonstrate and to account for what they can reasonably be held to be accountable for (MacBeath, 1999). The tension between the need for accountability

and the need that evaluation serves for improvement is constant (Learmonth, 2000; Ferguson, 2000).

School improvement and teachers' professionalisation

Improvement is an ongoing need in any school. Students have to improve their learning performance. Teachers have to develop their teaching and skills, curricular materials have to be continually updated and improved, and the school as a whole must continuously improve itself in order to compete with other schools or as a response to requests for innovation and modernisation (Nevo, 1995). An ongoing flow of information to schools, teachers and students is crucial to make it possible for them to find the way schools need to be changed. Information on the changing needs that schools have to serve, opportunities that schools can take advantage of, recommended strategies to be followed, and ongoing processes that have to be upgraded can all serve as a basis for improvement. One source for this kind of information might be processes of evaluation (Hoy, 2000; Stoll, and Fink, 1996; Wilcox, 1996). In particular, these processes can serve the professionalisation of teachers. Better teachers provide better instruction, which facilitates better learning by students. Teaching is a profession that has to be treated reflectively; thus, using evaluation at several levels is essential. Teachers may use it to assess their students' needs in conjunction with school goals, assess available resources and opportunities, choose instructional strategies and evaluate the quality of their work. Thus evaluation could become an integral part of teachers' work (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Schon, 1988).

Understanding and control

A general perception of the relativism of evaluation has led schools and other educational institutions to undertake evaluation procedures, in various forms. The focus has been enlarged from earlier views of evaluation's function as mainly enhancing decision-making (Glasman, 1988; Stufflebeam, 1971) to the function of understanding and/or control, as an implicit or explicit, intended or unintended, product (Cullingford, 1999). Weiss (1999) argues that it is unrealistic to expect evaluations to have a direct impact on policy decisions; its real purpose should be to provide long-term 'enlightenment' through the way in which it challenges old ideas

and helps to re-order the policy agenda. The process of evaluation for understanding and developmental reasons has given new dimensions to the process of evaluation for action, which is connected to processes of improvement (Nevo, 1995).

As mentioned above the need for evaluation of the educational process arises from the need of the schooling process to generate an effective response to changing social and economic conditions. The origin, the initiative for the evaluation processes and their control might vary. External and internal evaluation and schools' control within these two forms of evaluation are dealt with in the next section.

External and internal sources of evaluation

There is a distinction between internal evaluation and external evaluation. Internal evaluation is described as an evaluation conducted by a teacher or a group of teachers, or by another professional educator or a group of professionals, within a school. An external evaluation can be conducted by the school district, the Ministry of Education using professional evaluators, regional inspectors, or any evaluation department. In some cases an independent evaluation consultant commissioned by the school can conduct the external evaluation (Nevo, 1995; Scriven, 1967, 1991; Stufflebeam, 1969). School self-evaluation or school-based evaluation is an example of a procedure of internal evaluation.

School self-evaluation

The notion of school self-evaluation emerged in the late '70s as the result of requiring audit data to meet accountability demands from the public and to facilitate administrative influence over curricular aims and performance of schools. Teacher educators, fearful that such demands might deprofessionalise schools, saw in school self-evaluation a means of both protecting schools against reductionist pressures and providing a stimulus for reflective practitioners (Schon, 1987). The interaction is between the institution and the public, and within the institutions themselves.

Writing about threat, Guba and Lincoln (1989), when arguing for the use of Fourth Generation Evaluation, claim that in an open society any stakeholder group should expect and receive the opportunity to provide input into an evaluation that affects it, and should exercise some control on behalf of its own interests. Since information means power and is the product of evaluation, the evaluation procedure is powerful, and those responsible for this procedure maintain the power. Stakeholders are the would-be users of the information derived from evaluation if they can see the relevance of this information to their claims, concerns and issues. These claims, concerns and issues arise out of the particular construction that this group has formulated and reflects their particular circumstances, experiences and values (MacBeath, 1996).

Simons (1987) makes the same connection between evaluation, threat and control when she indicates that evaluation is both a threatening and a political activity. Being educators, she argues, we need to formulate and practise evaluation as an educative activity, both in itself and as a service to the educative intents of others. She sees the education as a process of empowerment through self-knowledge in individual and in social groups. Simons suggests that school self-evaluation has two compatible roles: to inform the development of the institution applying the evaluation procedure and for public knowledge. Both are the aim and the source of the evaluation.

While writing about a democratic theory of evaluation, Simons is arguing for a basis for justified, professional self-direction in schooling as an alternative to both professional insulation and external control. She tries to focus on what schools themselves can do and should do, to improve schooling and to make their work more accessible to those who have a right to know and a need to judge. She is focusing on a form of accountability which is consonant with the conditions of school improvement and makes the understanding a crucial step towards change. By doing that she demonstrates the interrelations between the needs for evaluation mentioned above.

An internal evaluator, claims Nevo (1995), is usually better acquainted with the local context of the evaluation, and less threatening to those being evaluated. S/he knows the local problems, communicates better with local people, and remains on site to

facilitate the implementation of the evaluation recommendations. An internal evaluation usually serves the information needs of the school.

A more critical view on school self-evaluation is presented by Stoll, MacBeath and Mortimore (2001). They reflect on a decade of applying self-evaluation in Scottish schools by categorizing those schools into four categories: '*exuberantly effective*' – exemplified in a small number of schools: '*dutifully diligent*' – schools which follow the external guidelines, rarely exceeding the boundaries with the aim of implementing a coherent ongoing dynamic process: '*mechanistically moribund*' – schools that never touch the real heartbeat (of the school); and those schools which '*haphazardly hanging on*' (p.200).

Schools' inspection and external evaluation of schools

The focus of this study is an external scheme of evaluation. With the aim of putting this scheme in a wider context, three external evaluation schemes in three different Western countries have been examined: ERO in New Zealand, OFSTED in England and Meytzav in Israel². A careful examination shows certain clearly apparent similarities between the NZ and the English evaluation/inspection systems: the two systems share aims, their evaluators have comparable profiles, the schools assessed are active participants in the process, the audience for the reports is similar, and both systems contain a built-in mechanism for remedial action where needed. By all these criteria, the Israeli system stands apart.

All three systems declare that their aim is to improve the quality of education. The underlying assumptions – about what is 'quality of education' and the ways to improve it – are at the heart of the differences among the systems. The English system includes self-evaluation, regular monitoring, and school's capacity as part of it. The NZ system uses the process to help policy decision-making, and intervenes in the 'how' and not just the 'what'. The Israeli system perceives the head teacher as the implementer. The evaluation system *provides the tool*, but at the same time the indicators are external; priorities to act upon are set by the school.

² See appendix no. 1 for a detailed comparison of the English, New Zealand and Israeli systems for school inspection/external evaluation.

In both cases, NZ and England, the body in charge of carrying out the evaluation is a non-ministerial government department, whereas before 2006 the Israeli one was a department of the Ministry of Education³.

While the English and NZ systems train their inspectors for the job, the Israeli evaluators are non-professional persons. The Israeli scheme does not include school's visits, a fact that limits the tools they use for evaluation. The themes of evaluation are more general in the Israeli system.

The audience for the report in the English and NZ systems is the whole community and interested parties further a field, the reports being published on the web, while in Israel the head teacher decides with whom s/he would like to share the information.

The report in Israel does not include recommendations, and carries no sanctions or awards. There is only a single requirement for following actions in Israel: presenting an action plan. In NZ and England the actions are proportionate to the level of need. (For instance, in NZ, ERO works with schools having serious weaknesses, to address the issues of concern).

In general the English and NZ systems have a declared aim of influencing policy: the school takes part in the evaluation/inspection process before, during and after the act itself. In Israel, by contrast, the evaluation is 'done' to a school by an external agent who explicitly or implicitly represents the Ministry of Education. Israeli schools do not need to take part in pre-evaluation activities, and only very limited actions consequent on the evaluation are required. On the other hand the power in the Israeli systems stays in the hands of the head teacher who can decide who it is s/he will share the information with. With no categorisation or sanctions, it seems that the school in Israel retains a greater autonomy.

However, Stoll and Fink (1996) argue that there is very little evidence that external assessments actually improve the quality of education. Furthermore, Reed and Street (2002) claim that in a climate where marketization of education and reform based on

³ See the explanation on the next page.

standards, accountability and central government control is enhanced, self-evaluation of schools has tended to be overshadowed. However, attempts to use both forms of evaluation, with a changing balance from the external one to the internal or vice versa or using a combination of the two, has emerged in the Western world (Ferguson, 2000; MacBeath, 1999; MacGilchrist, 2000; Nevo, 1995; OFSTED, 2003). Proposed changes to inspection of schools in England suggest that an evaluation culture drawing creatively on the strengths of both is now beginning to emerge (Smith., 2006).

A description of the model of external evaluation which forms the framework of this thesis is presented in the following part.

Meytzav⁴ – an external evaluation scheme in Israel

Meytzav was launched in March 2000 so as to help the head teacher and her/his team to plan and effectively use the school's resources with the aim of improving school functioning. The evaluation scheme perceives the head teacher as the implementer. It *provides the tool*, but at the same time the indicators for the evaluation are external; priorities to act upon are set by the school. The evaluation report gives the school's staff a holistic view of the state of their school. Its aim is to describe but not to explain the situation, to provide information for decision-making.

This scheme is based on one used by the same department of evaluation at the Ministry of Education between 1997 and 2000, to evaluate a region-wide project. A number of changes have been introduced to the topics of the external evaluation during the years, but they are not fundamental or substantive variations and do not have a significant impact on the general picture arising from the reports.

The body that is in charge of the evaluation was until recently a department within the Ministry of Education. At the beginning of 2006 this was changed. A new body was

⁴ The Hebrew acronym translate as *Growth and Effectiveness Measures for Schools*.

established, one which would be in charge of all evaluation activities undertaken in the Israeli educational context. It remains a governmental body, but it operates independently, directly accountable now to the Minister of Education. The legislation referring to this body is still to be defined.

The external evaluation is applied in each school (primary and junior high school) throughout the country, regularly every second year rather than in relation to perceived need⁵. Its indicators include:

- Pedagogical Environment: action plan, school priorities and staff consensus, teaching resources and teaching methods, weak students and the help they get
- Academic achievements in the four basic subjects (Language, Maths, Science, English)
- School Climate and Work Environment

Causal relations are not measured and leadership is barely touched on. The spiritual, moral and cultural development of students is not measured.

The sources of information are:

- Tests for 5th and 8th grades in the four core subjects mentioned.
- Questionnaires for all students from 4th to 6th grades dealing with school climate, pedagogical environment, etc.
- Telephone interviews with all head teachers and about two thirds of the teachers at each school, dealing with work environment, teaching methods, and staff development.

⁵ From May 2007 onwards the external evaluation will be conducted in each school once every four years. It is conducted at the end of a designated academic year (and not at the beginning of the following year, as previously), so that students are tested on recently learnt material.

No formal preparation of students for the external evaluation procedure is conducted⁶.

The Meytzav report includes the following parts:

An introduction – the rationale, the process and the aims of Meytzav are explained.

Guidelines as to how to read the report, and what questions to consider.

Information grouped under the following categories:

The pedagogical environment

The action plan

School resources

Ways of instruction

Low achievers

Students' attainments

Language

Mathematics

Science

English

School Climate and Work Environment

School climate

Work environment

All the data is presented in the form of graphs and tables. The information in it is compared to the information from the previous report at the same school, as well as to

⁶ Nevertheless, booklets are being published by commercial bodies to serve students or schools who are interested in preparing themselves for the tests. In appendix no. 3 there is a translation of a letter which appeared on the Internet. This letter attempts to explain why preparing for the test is superfluous. Obviously, the need for such a letter implies that schools have indeed already been preparing their students for the external evaluation.

the statistical averages from schools of the same type throughout the country. The report does not include recommendations, and carries no sanctions or rewards, apart from the single action plan required. The head teacher is the one who receives the report. S/he decides to what extent and when s/he would like to share the information and with whom.

Meytzav does not include the aim of influencing policy, nor does it have accountability measures. The external evaluation is carried out at schools by an external agent who has been a representative of the Ministry of Education. The rubric of the evaluation includes a statement that the control in the Israeli evaluation procedure remains mainly in the hands of the head teacher. This statement, which is supported by the fact that there is no public categorisation of schools, and by the report's not being made available on the web, is an attempt to reassure schools that they will retain their autonomy.

Meytzav has set out:

*'To aid school staff in making data-based decisions, in order to use resources wisely and to improve school functioning'*⁷.

Its final stage is a report that is provided to schools and includes the processed information which was previously collected at the schools. The above-mentioned aim is the reason to check *to what extent the report's findings are taken on board and why*. In other words, *to what extent is "evaluation utilisation" (Alkin, 1979) taking place? What characteristics of the report enhance its utilisation, what constrain it and why is this the case? Furthermore, why do some schools use the report for improvement more thoroughly, more effectively, than others? (Gray, 1996).*

Research on school self-evaluation (Hargreaves, 1991; MacGilchrist, 1995), school development planning (Grace, 1997; MacBeath, 1994, 1999; MacCormick, 1989; Stoll, and Fink, 1996) and school capacity and capacity building (Cousins, and

⁷ Retrieved in January 2007 from:
<http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Haaracha/Meitzav/>

Leithwood, 1993; Earl, 2000; Klerks, 1999; Stoll, 1999) suggests that discussing the research/evaluation findings in schools and trying to adjust these findings to local circumstances changes and improves schooling, enhances participants' willingness to be involved in the process and reflect on such processes, and enhances awareness of the actions they are or are not undertaking; ultimately, that it increases the school's internal capacity for knowledge utilisation. Using the findings of reports might lead to greater awareness of local circumstances, which will enable schools to further investigate their own priorities and actions, applying procedures of self-evaluation and knowledge utilisation. It is hoped that this research will contribute to a better understanding of how to enhance the school's capacity for knowledge utilisation.

Summary

The role of evaluation at the education system in Israel is constantly growing. Yet while a great deal of work is being done, and considerable resources are being invested in conducting external evaluation in schools, nobody has been appointed to monitor to what extent these schools take on board the results in the evaluation report so as to improve their practice, or indeed whether or not they actually have the capacity to use their evaluation reports. Stoll and Fink (1996) argue that there is very little evidence that external assessments actually improve the quality of education, and that there is more evidence of their negative effects on teaching. Given that the external evaluation process conducted in Israel has certain features similar to the inspection process in other Western countries, the present research may be generally applicable, in that it seeks to illuminate the relationship between external evaluation and school's improvement.

Because the Israeli external evaluation scheme aims to *aid school staff in making data-based decisions* and consequently improve the school's functioning, a clear attempt is made to reassure schools that they will retain their autonomy. The rubric of the evaluation procedure states that control in the procedure remains mainly in the hands of the head teacher, and there is in fact no consequent public categorisation of

schools. In that case, what motivates schools to take on board the evaluation findings presented to them in the report they receive?

This research, then, aims to provide a much greater understanding of what helps, and what constrains, schools' use of evaluation reports as a reflective resource to monitor and evaluate progress towards their priorities and targets. This would be a significant contribution to the knowledge base of school evaluation and school improvement in my country.

Literature Review

Introduction

Considering that one of the main aims of evaluation is improvement, and that one of the primary assumptions that this study is based upon is that knowledge utilisation is at the heart of school improvement; this will be the first issue under examination.

The argument hereafter is rooted in claims about the nature of knowledge utilisation. Within the framework of this study, knowledge utilisation is a process built upon an external source of information. This external source of information is itself based on data collected beforehand at schools through a process of external evaluation. Possible outcomes of a successful knowledge utilisation will be described, as well as factors that should be taken into account within a data led approach. The rest of the literature review is further concerned with the influences on the process of knowledge utilisation. These influences are threefold: there is firstly the source of the information, secondly the school itself – the persons involved in these processes and the interactions among them – and finally the external context, which involves issues of power and politics as well as pressure and support.

Knowledge Utilisation

Knowledge utilisation is closely linked to school improvement (Huberman 1987; Cousins 1993). Using newly incorporated knowledge might energize, inform, and direct action, and facilitate authentic school improvement (Hopkins, 2001).

‘The concept of knowledge utilisation suggests that people should use knowledge and, by implication, knowledge should be useful...the expectation is that something good will come out of using knowledge in the purposes of action’ (Buchmann, 1985).

As was mentioned in the introduction to this thesis it is the external evaluation which makes up the source of knowledge at schools, which provide the lenses through which this study researches knowledge utilisation in them. Cousins and his colleagues (1996) surveyed a sample of 564 evaluators and 68 practitioners. The survey included a list of beliefs that respondents could agree or disagree with. A significant majority (71 percent) agreed with the statement: '*the evaluator's primary function is to maximize intended uses by intended users of evaluation data*' (p. 215).

It is argued that utilisation can be perceived as a continuum. Two discrete points have been suggested by Cousins and Leithwood (1986) on this continuum. One point is knowledge use for instrumental purposes: a specific research finding, for example, being used as the primary basis for a decision. The other point is conceptual (or educative) use of information: one learns from the information, which has an indirect bearing on one's thoughts and actions. The processing of information is a prerequisite to learning from it and basing decisions on it. It implies that these two kinds of learning / knowledge use exist on a continuum and that the distinction between them is not clear-cut. Another assumption is rooted in this observation: Knowledge utilisation is about learning; consequently learning processes should be part of the concerns of this review.

Sources for creating a shared knowledge base in schools vary. It might be individual knowledge, knowledge created by schools, or knowledge sought from others. These sources of knowledge can be developed at two levels: firstly, utilising existing evidence from worldwide research, and secondly, establishing sound evidence where existing evidence is lacking or of a questionable, uncertain or weak nature. The relations between the different types of knowledge, Learmonth (2003) argues, should involve respect for the evidence that different experience provides to the process of school improvement. Much of the literature regarding knowledge utilisation examines this phenomenon by looking at research knowledge utilisation. Researchers have tried to define the site for utilisation by applying the following concepts: the knowledge-creating school (Hargreaves 1999), the evidence-based approach (Southworth 1999) or, in its refined version, evidence-influenced practice (Nutley 2000). In this part of the study I will examine knowledge utilisation by referring to literature regarding

information that derives from a variety of sources outside the school, such as research, policy documents and external evaluation.

It has been claimed that schools cannot learn until there is an agreement, whether explicit or implicit, about what they know about their students, about when and how teaching and learning occurs, and about how to change (Louis 1998; Hargreaves 1999; James 2000). These are inquiry-minded schools. Yet, all too often, people who provide data to schools assume that teachers will know what to do with it. Furthermore some schools staffs believe they have achieved their purpose once they have collected data (Hopkins, 2001). However, knowledge produced outside the practitioner's own system may be legitimately viewed as invalid, or 'non-knowledge' (Campbell, 1995). Moreover, information on schools, wherever it is created, is only helpful if it is used (Stoll, 1996). Information can be easily transferred but knowledge is not useable at the local site until it is interpreted, either by the individual or by the group, and has been '*socially processed through some collective discussion and agreement on its validity and applicability*' (Louis 1994). Thus it can become usable knowledge only consequent to its being interpreted, constructed, and stored (Larsen 1981; Weiss 1981; Kennedy 1984; Klein 1992; Louis 1992, 1994; Watkins 1995). There needs to be interaction between the source of information and the improvement setting, the processes which lie between disseminators of information and its actual use in practice-based communities (Larsen 1981). The core problem about knowledge utilisation is how to disseminate relevant, new information to people working in schools so that it will be attended to and subsequently incorporated into their thinking about the purpose of their own school and the means to improve it. Fullan (2001) sees three broad phases to the change process: *initiation*, *implementation* and *institutionalisation*. These phases include sub-phases, with numerous factors affecting each one of them, and they are not linear. The *initiation* stage is parallel to the stage of *getting started* in an external improvement initiative and consists of the process that leads up to and includes a decision to adopt or proceed with a change. The *adaptation/implementation* process itself, whether the initiative is an external one or internal, is particularly significant. The successful process generally depends on the level of the capacity of a school to improve, and particularly its capacity for knowledge utilisation. It has to be emphasized that these phases are not clear-cut; moreover, most of the characteristics of each phase are not unique, nor are they

incompatible with each other. Cognitive, affective and social characteristics are interwoven in each of them (James, 2000).

To conclude, since a grasp of the meaning is a prerequisite for the implementation of any new data (Hopkins 2001), clear explanation and staff development may be necessary as well as an understanding of the history, context and culture of the school from which data has been collected and to which it will be returned. In school-focused knowledge use, the conditions for the construction of new meanings exist (Louis 1988; Louis 1992). Cousins (1993) argues that ongoing, sustained contact with experts has to be established as implementation occurs. Some forms of useful educational knowledge can be spread with only minimal effort at dissemination. Other knowledge may require systematic policy interventions and organisational support before it becomes integrated into practical thinking. Assessing which knowledge needs which intervention in any specific school is at the moment not easily predictable. It is still necessary to examine which types and structures of interaction are successful.

Possible outcomes of a successful process of knowledge utilisation

School improvement

The theories underlying the understanding of school improvement are derived from research into the functioning of organisations, checking why particular actions lead in specific contexts to certain outcomes, and offering new ways of thinking about organisational change. These theories focus on organisational processes and causal relationships between processes, within a larger system. They appear to seek a balance between institutional factors, which partly emerge from the institutional culture, and individual ones.

Van Velzen et al. (1985) have defined school improvement as:

A process whose aim is to strengthen... the school's capacity to deal with change. Improving the competencies of a school to manage itself, to analyse its problems and its needs and to develop and carry out a strategy of change (p.34).

Sophisticated knowledge utilisation might be one means by which it is attained; it might also be, itself, one aim of school's improvement, if, as was claimed earlier, successful knowledge utilisation enhances a school's capacity to deal with change and to improve. The above definition does not lend itself to prescribed educational goals; it does, however, convey the message that the nature of improvement is a sustainable effort aimed at strengthening the school's capacity to deal with change; and it sees the school as offering scope for improvement. School improvement is seen as an ongoing process concerned with growth rather than with control, about 'working with' rather than 'working on' (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; MacBeath, 1996). It is about a school's autonomy to determine its own priorities and its own methods for achieving these priorities. Moreover it is claimed that students and teachers will learn best when an emancipatory dimension to school improvement is offered to them (Cohen and Ball, 1999). Relevant information that is provided to the school, and the ability to use it in a sophisticated manner, might make these processes better informed. There is a wide agreement that capacity building and improvement are about learning and providing the conditions for it (Barth, 1990; Stoll and Fink, 1992; Creemers and colleagues, 2000). Being part of this process, the same is applicable to building capacity for knowledge utilisation.

The contextual and the cultural nature of processes for school improvement are emphasized (Reynolds 1999; Hopkins 2001). School improvement of the 'third age' (Fullan 1993) or the 'third wave' (Stoll 1999) has some characteristics such as tailored 'contextually specific' improvement strategies, which gets further emphasis in Hopkins's (2001) argument for authentic school improvement; an interwoven quantitative and qualitative methodology, and 'top down' pressure [*accountability*, as Fullan (2005) suggest] with 'bottom up' support (*capacity building*, Fullan, op cit); knowledge from practice integrated with knowledge from research. The capacities of

a school to improve, including its capacity for knowledge utilisation, take a central place. School improvement in general, and enhanced knowledge utilisation in particular, might both be the result of a successful process of knowledge utilisation at a school.

Building further the school's capacity for knowledge utilisation

Building internal capacity is proposed as an essential condition for school improvement and for the effective adoption of change or of a reform initiative (Cousins 1993; Stoll 1999; Fullan 2001; Hopkins 2001). Building capacity for knowledge utilisation might be one means to effect change and one phase of developing internal capacity.

It is possible to suggest that since the school is a dynamic institution placed in a dynamic, data-driven society, this is an ongoing, never-ending process.

Fullan (2005) defines 'capacity building' as *'developing the collective ability – dispositions, skills, knowledge, motivation, and resources – to act together to bring about positive change'* (p. 4). Clarke (1999) defines it as the process of enhancing standards whilst fostering a 'learning community' of 'learning schools'. He claims that it represents *"a deliberate attempt to redefine educational practice"* (p.2). However, the organisation itself has to acknowledge the underlying purpose of its capacity building; thus connectedness between key elements of capacity building will become evident, as will be these elements' linkage to a capacity-building agenda (Hopkins, 2001; Stoll et al. 2003). Senge (1990) adds the perspective of the community of learners within the organisation to the same elements: *all members of the community continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, and this is the underlying purpose of their capacity building, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together* (p.3).

Following on from Stoll's definition (1999) of internal capacity *"the power to engage in and sustain continuous learning of teachers and the school itself for the purpose of enhancing student learning"* (p.506) she, as other researchers do later, suggests a dynamic point of view. She refers to the process of developing internal capacity as a

'habit of mind' (Hill 1997), a daily habit of working together (Fullan, 2005). The ability to sustain learning is about helping teachers to make continuous improvement a lifelong obligation, a process that never ends.

Capacity, and capacity building, are contentious, complex concepts, whose precise nature does not fall within the focus of the present research; rather, it is their connectedness to knowledge utilisation which is a central concern of this thesis.

Using evidence-based management and leadership

On the basis of their study of using evidence-based management and leadership, Southworth and Conner (1999) claim that schools' approaches to evidence-based improvement point to a development of an analytic approach to the work and the students' learning and a particular school culture in which it develops. An important aspect of this culture is its achievement-orientation and its concern with teachers' professional learning. Gathering information via enquiries might become a tool to enhance teacher reflection and to inform staff development. An evidence-based approach to school improvement plays a major role in creating the conditions for staff members to transform their workplaces into learning and teaching schools.

It is important for systems such as schools to become smart by increasing their 'progressive interactions' (Perkins, 2003 cited in Fullan, 2005). Knowledge utilisation at school can provide a fertile ground for it. These interactions maximize quality knowledge and social cohesion, or in the words of Perkins (2003) they are comprised of two aspects: 'process smart' (good exchange of ideas, good decisions and solutions, farseeing plans) and 'people smart' (interactions that foster cohesiveness and energize people to work together).

In a study of the most useful sources of information for improving curriculum and instruction, Cousins and Leithwood (1993) found that knowledge utilisation improved the following:

Social processing – the inherently social process of collegial interaction and dialogue which determines how information is relevant to the work context of those responsible for making use of that information. These interactions might provide a

sound basis for better and more matching to the context, use of the new information. Such deliberation sometimes results in the formulation of specific school plans.

Engagement – active involvement in implementing or disseminating follow-up activities. The majority of the benefits of engagement are conceptual, and some personal and organisational evidence of decision-oriented benefits is apparent. Importance is given to ongoing assistance in collegial working relationships.

Involvement – direct participation in disseminating or initiating the push for change are found to impact on decision-making at both the personal and organisational levels. Two dimensions of involvement seem especially important. Participation in preparatory activities rather than dissemination is more likely to inspire sustained ownership and commitment. And a critical mass of people involved makes it easier to sustain the change initiative. The head teacher has to be more of an active participant rather than a facilitator or a coordinator with the aim of enhancing involvement.

Ongoing contact – interaction with curriculum personnel, in-school technical assistants and initiators of change are frequently cited as factors that enhance the usefulness of disseminated information, especially organisational benefits (not personal ones). The majority of contacts with local people are valued because of their accessibility, their knowledge of local context and their personal stake in the change effort.

Factors to take into account in a data-led approach

Research suggest that there is a danger embedded in using data-led approach to reform (Clarke 1999). It might be a technical solution to a complex issue involving human, emotional, cultural and strategic influences. Similarly, *high stakes testing can push teachers to deliver improved results, but not necessarily to produce better learning* (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003, p. 442). The distinction made by Fullan (2001) between the ‘fidelity’ and ‘evolutionary’ perspectives on change is useful in the context both of individual teachers and organizations. The fidelity approach to change is based on the assumption that an already developed innovation exists and the task is to get individuals and groups of individuals to implement it faithfully in practice. The

evolutionary perspective stresses that change should be a result of adaptations and decisions made by users as they work with particular new data, with the user's situation determining the outcome. A similar point is addressed by Stoll et al. (2001) when they mention that in the mid- and late 1990s there was an increase in the number of 'designer' programmes for improvement, but that although these programmes were piloted and evaluated, and succeeded in some schools, they did not fit all schools. Similarly, Timperley and Robinson (2000) argue that schools should be treated and developed as organisations which do not pursue fixed plans in pursuit of set goals, but structure and develop themselves so that they and their members can continually learn from experience, from one another, and from the world around them, and ultimately in order to embed their learning within their own context.

Similarly, implicit in evaluation, Alkin et al. (1979) argues, is the presence of a user for whom it is hoped the evaluation will have relevance. But for evaluation to be useful it has to be attuned to the realities of school situations and to meeting the information needs of various users. This can partly be achieved by considering the views of the 'stakeholders' as a part of the evaluation. This may lead to examination of the relationship between evaluation and organisational learning (Cousins 2003). Patton (2003) suggests that involving practitioners in evaluation projects results in greater cognitive processing. He further claims that this occurs through active discussion of diverse perspectives, the development within individuals of feelings of worth and value, and the provision of "voice" to those with less power in organisations. This enhances people's understanding and acceptance of research findings, or evaluation results, and increases their sense of responsibility for implementing results. This sense of responsibility claims Learmonth (2003) build both competence and confidence in gaining and using knowledge, and enhance users' capabilities of choice. Generally, Hargreaves et al (2001) suggest that teachers have to decode the language of the documents and determine if the intentions expressed in them are in line with their own social and educational mission. A joint effort of research and practical system, participating in problem-solution processes and educating one another, is suggested (Wingens 1990; Mathison 1991). It is asserted that teachers' practitioner knowledge is constructed largely by individuals, through both reflective practice (Schon 1983) and more disciplined inquiry, such as action research (Carr 1986). Can evaluation findings become a trigger for these processes?

Can these findings provide relevant information to schools? Furthermore, are the findings usable for practitioners and do they provide a data-base on which they can generate their own knowledge? While schools have to become 'knowledge generators', the concept of *knowledge utilisation* and the influences on it has to be explored further. Apparently, part of it will refer to organisational features.

For example, making key distinctions between PLC (Professional learning communities) and what Hargreaves (2003) calls 'performance training sects', among other distinctions he mentions the following two points:

- PLC use evidence and data to inform the improvement of practice; performance training sects employ achievement results as the sole arbiter of approved practice.
- PLC gets groups to engage in continuous learning about their teaching; performance training sects promote group-think and loyalty to external prescriptions through intensive training.

It is possible to suggest that sophisticated use of external evaluation data might promote *action learning* (Marquardt, 1996 cited in: Mitchell and Sackney, 2000) because it provides a fresh, new point of view. It has the potential for reframing, which allows the examination of accepted assumptions to move into an experimental action phase. However, Weiss (1999), referring to the data that evaluation can provide to policy makers, argues that it is unrealistic to expect evaluations to have a direct impact on policy decisions. The real purpose of evaluation, she contends, is to provide long-term 'enlightenment' through the way in which it '*challenges old ideas, provides new perspectives and helps to re-order the policy agenda*' (p. 472). Is the same idea applicable in the context of practitioners?

While Alkin (2003) claims that the issues related to the use of evaluation are at the heart of the theoretical writing and practice of evaluation, others claim that there has been no rigorous research into the impact of inspection itself; moreover, that inspection agencies have made only relatively modest claims about their own contribution to improvement (Martin 2005). Such claims are not necessarily

contradictory: it might be that the usefulness of evaluation is at the heart of the theoretical writing and practice of evaluation, but at the same time, its impact has not been rigorously researched. OFSTED (2004) recently stated that *'inspection has played its part, along with many processes, in a gradual rise in standards'*, but noted that *'improvement has been very gradual, and, even in those aspects in which it has been most marked there are signs of it slowing down'*. The same claim is put forward by Fullan (2005). A former senior official in the Audit Commission put it this way: *'inspection has made a very big impact on the floor but it has not had much of an effect on the ceiling'* (p.5). *'We can't do anything for 'good' or 'excellent' authorities except to leave them alone'* (Martin, 2005, p. 501).

Maybe this was the reason for the OFSTED paper (2004) to suggest that they should reposition themselves as proactive 'agents of improvement', maintaining regular contact with inspected bodies and providing them with practical advice about what they must do in order to improve. Though it is generally accepted that knowledge utilisation may become an important part of school improvement, the extent to which sophisticated knowledge utilisation at school can actually promote improvement is not clear, nor is it easy to establish which would be the most effective ways of doing it.

However, different forms of activity initiate very different forms of capacity building (Clarke, 1999). It is possible to refer to the typology of moving, strolling, cruising, struggling and sinking schools (Stoll and Fink, 1996) in order to match certain strategies for developing capacity for knowledge utilisation with schools where each of these would be appropriate. Still it is not evident which strategies fit which schools. Hopkins et al (1997) stress the importance of outlining a school's capacity and, at the same time, they suggest another possible typology: failing schools which need a high level of external support, moderately effective schools or 'low achieving' schools which need a certain level of external support but mostly can improve by themselves, and effective schools which might welcome external support but not necessarily need it. Effective schools can create their own support networks. Hopkins's typology seems to resemble to schools' life cycles: the fragmented school, which needs a lot of external support, the project school and the organic school, which creates its own innovation experience (Dalin and Rolff, 1993).

Having paid special attention to the need for information to become usable knowledge in order to inform school improvement, it seems necessary to unfold the factors and the conditions that enable a school to carry out a successful and sophisticated knowledge utilisation. Cousins and Leithwood (1986) suggest three independent constructs or categories of factors that influence the extent and type of use of information. Other researchers (Huberman 1994; Louis 1998; Davies 1999; Creemers 2001) refer to similar categories: the characteristics of the source of information, the institutional and individual characteristics, and the interactions between these variables. In the following material a similar form of categorisation is used. But considering that evaluation is set up in order to gather data and facilitate school improvement, and that the model I have suggested for my research is an external scheme of evaluation, a further category is added, that is the category of external forces and the power and politics that are involved in the process.

Since in the case of the current research the source of information (the external report) is the same for all schools, this is the first category to be dealt with, right after the other categories are examined: aspects of the setting and the external context.

Possible influences on knowledge utilisation

The quality of the source of information

Weiss's (1981; 1991) research on research utilisation tells us that much research appears to have little or no impact on practice. Different sets of interests and concerns create gaps between researchers and practitioners in relation to any research project and hence they often find it difficult to communicate with one another. She claims that knowledge is value-laden and chaotic; hence dissemination and knowledge utilisation become uncertain activities. In addition, post-modern points of view perceive knowledge as local, contested, partial and political. This is the reason that research knowledge generated outside is only one source of knowing, and its use must be negotiated. The point is even stronger with utilisation-focused evaluation. If forms of evaluation should be judged by their utility and actual use (for improvement), it

requires moving from the general and abstract to the real and specific, and being accompanied by constant negotiations (Patton, 2003).

The issue of recommendations however, is a contentious one. Whereas in some cases it is argued that advice should be separated from inspection (Fitz-Gibbon 1999) and that 'informed prescription' had its limitation (Fullan, 2005). On the other hand, Cousins and his colleagues (1996) have found out that a great consensus among evaluators and practitioners centred on the statement: "*Evaluators should formulate recommendations from the study*" (p. 220).

It has been argued that the following characteristics need to be considered while relating to the source of information and its perception by the audience receiving it (Cousins 1993; Huberman 1994; Davies 2000):

Sophistication: the perceived quality of the source of information, including its technical sophistication, appropriateness, and rigour. The perceived value of the information, the extent of change required for adopting the new knowledge.

Credibility: the perceived believability and validity of the source of help, and of those responsible for dissemination. The associated weight attributed to varying sorts of information and evidence of improved performance.

Relevance: pertinence to the audience's needs, gaps in personal knowledge and expertise perceived by the intended audience, defined especially in terms of practicality, perceived as having relative advantage and compatibility.

Communication quality: the clarity, style, and readability with which the knowledge is conveyed to the intended audience. The extent to which the knowledge is precise, gives clear guidance, and is formulated in sufficiently simple terms. The extent to which local power-holders find it appealing.

Content: whether or not the content is perceived to be congruent with existing knowledge, and how far it is valued. Whether it is seen to be positive and of sufficient scope.

Timeliness: the extent to which knowledge is perceived to be disseminated at an appropriate time and delivered in an ongoing manner. Timescales, for example, are different in research and practices as are dynamics; research is slow while policy situations change quickly.

Aspects of the setting and the interactions among these

Because knowledge utilisation is not an aim in itself, but it is one of the means to promote school improvement and change or it might be one aim of school improvement and closely linked to it, the aspects of the setting include factors and conditions that generally facilitate and promote school improvement and learning.

The issue of readiness

Readiness for change and capacity for ownership are vital (Fullan, 1993). Derr (1976) further claims that an organisation should possess a certain 'readiness' in order to employ organisational development. Fullan et al (1990) argue for *readiness conditions* to be focused so that an institution can improve. They describe the following conditions: stable environment, certain level of favourable attitude and initial propensity for collective problem-solving. Moreover it is the individual teacher's personal skills, habits and beliefs, his/her psychological well-being that influence to a large extent a school's readiness for change (Hargreaves, 1994).

Hargreaves et al (2001) further claim that successful innovation draws on teachers' capacity to understand the changes they are confronting. It is concerned with the meanings and interpretations teachers assign to change, how changes affect and even challenge teachers' beliefs as well as their practices, how they understand the changes that face them, and the impact of change on their ideas, beliefs, emotions, and experiences. Changes are both intellectual and emotional. Teachers' motivation to change their practice is influenced by the extent to which they think that their personal goals are consistent with the details of the reform and that they have acquired, or can acquire, the knowledge and skills necessary to implement the change, and their belief that the reform will be supported over time. Meaning, motivation and relationships are at the heart of the change process. Their readiness to use the new knowledge, which

might imply a change in their work routine, might be influenced by the same tendencies.

Identifying these conditions in an organisation is not simple nor does it promise to be enough for launching successfully a process of change (including knowledge utilisation). Researchers (Stoll 1994; MacBeath 1999) have claimed that it is important to understand the state of readiness of an institution before it can effectively cope with change. They claim that schools are at different stages of readiness for change, whether this has been initiated externally or internally. Improvement conditions and strategies must meet the stage of readiness at each school. At the same time it is argued that referring to schools' stage of readiness is not enough.

Readiness and capacity

A school can be ready enough but not have the capacity, in terms of teachers' skills, for example, to deal with new information. Because schools are dynamic organisations, these terms need to be understood at a conceptual, contextual and empirical level, before one can identify the conditions which enable improvement generally, and knowledge utilisation in particular. At this stage, the conceptual level will be the main focus, while the contextual and empirical levels will be the concern of the research itself. This will be done by crystallising the various ways which are suggested by researchers that capacity for knowledge utilisation in schools might manifest itself. Researching the components of capacity for knowledge utilisation in each school, and doing it over time, is a strategy employed to explore a school's collective ability to sustain learning, as well as to explore whether its capacity to deal with change and to improve has been developed over time and, if so, what the conditions which facilitated it might be.

Definitions of capacity depend on how the term is used in the context of a school. Different researchers and theorists have been concerned with different types of capacity. All of them, however, agree about the significance of capacity to the organisation and improvement of schools. Some (Hopkins 1997; Clarke 1999; Stoll 1999) discuss the capacity for improvement, or for lasting improvement, the capacity for development, the capacity to change or a school's internal capacity. Others, like Corcoran and Goertz (1999) or Cohen and Ball (1999) write about instructional

capacity, which might be the result of a school's capacity for learning (Stoll 2002). Capacity for learning in general, and for organisational learning in particular, might include capacity to use data-based evidence effectively (Klerks 1999) which is the main concern of this research. Apparently the broader terms of capacity mentioned above encompass these narrower terms of it.

The unbreakable connection between capacity and learning exists in a recent definition by Stoll and Earl (2003): "*capacity is a quality of people or organizations that allows them routinely to learn from the world around them and apply their learning to new ... situations so that they continue on a path toward their goals...It also helps them continuously to improve learning and progress at all levels...*" (p. 492). Similarly, relating to the process, rather than the product, Cohen and Ball (1999) and Creemers et al (2000) argue that some uses of the term 'capacity' focus on the ability of the school to learn, grow and change. This interpretation deals with the construction of new knowledge and skills in practice. They suggest that capacity would in part be a variable function of the prevailing *goals and methods of instruction* and of the *nature of professional knowledge*. These things would influence capacity through the *ideas and beliefs of students and teachers*. They suggest a link between personal attributes, practice, reflection, growth and change. Newmann, King and Young (2000) refer, like Stoll (1999), to the school as an entity while trying to define school capacity. They see capacity as the collective abilities of the school that bring about effective change.

Building capacity for knowledge utilisation is one factor in school improvement. Harris and Lambert (2003) claim that the two key components of a capacity-building model are '*the professional learning community (the people, interpersonal and organizational arrangements working in developmental or learning synergy) and the leadership capacity (as the route to generating the social cohesion and trust to make this happen)*' (p.5).

Leadership and knowledge utilisation

The need for a broad-based skilful involvement in the work of leadership is emphasised by Harris and Lambert (2003) so is the need for redistribution of power and authority. "*Leadership*", they claim, "*is about learning together and constructing*

meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively" (p.17). Changing conditions require the intuition, creativity and reasoning power of everyone on a school staff (Fullan, 1999), therefore there has to be a critical mass of leaders at all levels of a system who are 'system thinkers' (Fullan, 2005). The task of the 'top leader' is to cultivate leadership in others (Hartle 2003; Stoll 2003; Fullan 2005), because *in a complex fast-paced world, leadership cannot rest on the shoulders of the few* (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003). The involvement of more practitioners in the work of leadership, and their consistent learning and thinking about the school's continuity and change, are also the concern of Hargreaves and Fink (2003), who conclude their chapter by saying that *'successful leadership is sustainable leadership'* (p. 448) that distributes leadership to the entire culture of the school and the larger community. Furthermore Fullan (2005) claims that in pursuing of sustainability (*"the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement"*) leadership is the primary engine. 'Moving' schools, which can confront complexity, will be led by leaders who communicate 'invitational' messages to people to highlight their abilities and responsibilities, as well as their being worthwhile (Stoll and Fink, 1996). As for the individual teacher at the school, in any type of leadership personal and professional factors, emotional, intellectual and cognitive aspects blend together. Facilitative leadership that enhances teacher empowerment has been perceived by teachers as demonstrating trust in teachers, developing shared governance structures, participative decision-making, encouraging and listening to individual input, providing a 'voice to those with less power in organisations', encouraging individual teacher autonomy, giving rewards and providing support (Blase 1995). This can only occur if staff can participate in development opportunities in and beyond the workplace and if senior leaders, especially the head teacher, are willing to give up some control and delegate to others (Riley 2005).

Using externally provided information usually necessitates change in the school culture, which relies mostly on leaders, because leaders are the culture founders; they install new values and beliefs to change school culture (Schein, 1985). In this context Schein (1985) suggested five mechanisms in which leaders are able to embed their own assumptions in the ongoing daily life of their schools. One of them is modelling. Modelling is effective in the context of leading learning. Moreover, one way to extend leadership is consciously to model the role for others, to model the values and

behaviour associated with best practice (Barth 1990; Dimmock 2000; Marks 2000; Hartle 2003). Supportive leaders are a source of constant pressure to think differently. Receiving new information on school from an external source of information might be a trigger for different thinking. It is argued that leaders in learning schools are innovative and encourage initiatives, risk-taking, and are open to change, evolutionary and developmental; they do not necessarily pursue systemic activities that are always aligned with core goals (Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1998; Leithwood and Louis, 1998). This necessitates creating a culture in which people do not fear making mistakes, a collaborative and supportive culture in which teachers can share ideas and are encouraged to investigate and be innovative (Collarbone, 2003; McMahon, 2003). Knowledge utilisation can benefit from these attributes as well as contribute to their further development.

Having a vision has been mentioned as an important dimension of transformational leadership (Stoll, 1999; Leithwood, 2000), but no less important for effective leadership is the ability to convey this vision to different groups (Stoll 1999; Mortimore 2000). Leadership is not just about leaders – it is about followers (Sergiovanni 1992). An intellectual vision of the leader is a powerful stimulus for collective learning. Intellectual leadership taps the extent to which new information reaches the school from either outside sources or internal sources (Leithwood et al, 2000). The change leaders who activate transformational leadership usually have a policy of systematic innovation that they might introduce by intellectual stimulation, but at the same time they do not neglect the individual consideration (Louis, et al. 1995; Stoll 1999; Leithwood 2000). Fundamental for teachers' learning in a school, and especially a school in a context of change and improvement, it seems relevant to take note of Goleman's (1998) observation that effective leaders possess high emotional intelligence factors, not merely cognitive abilities: self-awareness, self regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

If schools are to become human communities the three intelligences that are most important are the emotional, the spiritual and the ethical (MacGilchrist 2003). These three have important implications for school leaders: they are interdependent; they have maximum impact when used in combination and each have the potential to be developed and improved. They also require a view of leadership that is removed from

techniques, competency-based model of school leadership. It is the kind of leadership that creates human community through the application and development of the three intelligences. This might contradict to some extent the point of view mentioned above, concerning the important place of modelling in school's leadership.

In order to transform the culture of a school into a learning community, which was already emphasised as a condition for applying a successful knowledge utilisation, leaders must first and foremost be learners themselves; they have to lead learners in a learning community (Collarbone, 2003; Harris and Lambert, 2003; Stoll et al. 2003; Riley and Stoll, 2005). Consequently, while leading learning, attention has to be given to cognitive, social and emotional skills: growing a learning culture; nurturing trust and relationships to ensure effective collaboration and teamwork; offering a wide range of formal and informal learning opportunities; promoting enquiry-mindedness; making connections; creating, transferring and using new knowledge; ensuring supportive structures; working towards sustainability (Riley and Stoll, 2005).

The learning of the individual teacher in the school context

The role of professional educators' as influential partner in any change process and the *'heavy burden of responsibility for change and improvement...which rests on their shoulders'* as well as the fact that *'educational change that does not involve and is not supported by the teacher usually ends up as change for the worse, or as no real change at all'* (p. 34) is emphasised by Fullan and Hargreaves (1992).

Dealing with externally generated data, its potential to be contextualized and implemented in a school depends to a great extent on teachers' abilities and perceptions (Dalin 1995; Hargreaves 2001). This might be the reason for Chapman's warning (2000): the more demoralized and technicised teachers become, the more we are limiting the potential for school improvement. Stoll and Fink (1996) describe the changing concepts of teaching, of learning and of teachers' roles for the future. They argue that teachers should develop a clearer sense of purpose regarding changes in school culture and create a stimulating learning environment. The purpose, the shared meaning of change, and the interface between individual and collective meaning, is *'where change stands or falls'*, claims Fullan (2001, p. 9). Knowledge that is provided to schools has the potential to trigger, to inform and to enrich the process whereby

these different kinds of meaning are created. It was claimed earlier (p.26) that creating a shared meaning, an agreement, is a fundamental step towards knowledge utilisation in schools. Brimblecombe and colleagues (1996) point out that by receiving constructive, prescriptive and relevant individual feedback, teachers are influenced to change their practice. The external source of information might include these characteristics. The reciprocal relations between school as an institution and teachers as professional participants, or between individual teacher characteristics and collective or collegial factors, as Fullan (2001) defines it, place the teacher in pole position in any educational process that includes change. Fullan (2000) further stresses the connections between 'human capital' and 'social capital'. He claims that skills of individuals can only be realised if the relationships within the schools are continually developing. By 'social capital' he refers to *professional learning communities*, which encourage norms of collegiality, collaboration and cooperation, and *programme coherence*, where a school can selectively initiate, integrate, and co-ordinate innovations into its own focused programmes. Is it the same for new knowledge that is received by schools? Based on the following claims, it is possible to conclude that having capacity for knowledge utilisation might enhance teachers' capacity to deal with change and to improve.

Generally, the individual teacher's capacity is influenced by factors, which derive from intellectual, social and emotional resources, some personal, others professional. All of them are interconnected. Professional factors might include teachers' priorities, career patterns, experiences and skills in applying a variety of teaching strategies, and their ability to analyse a specific class situation. In the final analysis, Chapman (2000) claims, it is the actions of the individual that counts. The capacity for school improvement will be limited if the teacher's skills and knowledge are not developed and harnessed effectively. The implications for teachers' capacity for knowledge utilisation are clear.

Personal attributes might include teachers' beliefs, their emotional well-being, their willingness and motivation to learn. Teachers must feel valued by society and get job satisfaction, Stoll and Fink (1996) stress recognition of teachers and celebration of their successes as an important feature. Against this frame of reference the reciprocal relations between the individual teacher and the culture or climate of the school can

shape an individual's psychological state for better or for worse (Barth 1990; Fullan 1992; Stoll 1996; Fullan 2001).

Hargreaves (1994) emphasised the need of the teacher to be a lifelong learner if any improvement was to occur. Moreover it is emphasised that the learner has to have the capacity to use knowledge and create his own contextual knowledge base by combining practical with external knowledge (Mitchell 1998; Fullan 2001). It is important to highlight some personal characteristics of users, such as experience and prior history of information use. Hargreaves et al (2001) suggest that the way most teachers actually plan and use new knowledge is closely linked to their emotional connections with their students and their feelings as a teacher. Most teachers feel more comfortable starting with their own knowledge. Their approaches to planning are grounded in their intuitive judgments about what works in their classrooms and their feelings about, and understandings of, their students' needs.

Pajares (1992) claims that beliefs have stronger affective and evaluative components than knowledge. The powerful effect of beliefs is more useful in understanding and predicting how teachers make decisions and why consequently knowledge learned is often not used. All teachers have beliefs. Clark (1988) described these as preconceptions and implicit theories. Beliefs are formed early and tend to self-perpetuate, persevering even against contradictions caused by reason, time, schooling or experience. They serve as a filter through which teachers interpret new phenomena. The earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter. Newly acquired beliefs are most susceptible to change. Individuals tend to hold on to beliefs based on incorrect or incomplete knowledge, even after scientifically correct explanations are presented to them. Let alone new knowledge which is based on information gathered beforehand from their school. Beliefs are instrumental in defining tasks and selecting the cognitive tools with which to interpret, plan, and make decisions regarding such tasks; hence they play a critical role in defining behaviour and organising knowledge and information.

It is neither accurate nor possible to separate the personal and professional; there is a point where they blend. This point might be represented by a combination of a teacher's self awareness, which is intellectual as well as emotional, her perception of

knowledge, and the interaction of this knowledge in the context of the classroom and of the school, which represents the blend of the social, emotional and intellectual. An integral part of these influences on capacity to deal with change and to improve, is the ability of the individual teacher to realize the usefulness and the practicality of a new practice or initiative (or information), and the confidence that s/he can make a real difference; that is, a 'can do' attitude.

It is possible to conclude that teachers' learning in schools first influences its capacity for knowledge utilisation and ultimately influences its capacity for improvement. The school learning context includes individuals' characteristics as well as institutional factors, which blend together in complex ways and create different patterns of relationships.

Between individual learning and organisational learning

The relationship between the individual learning in schools and processes of organisational learning at schools is contentious. Leithwood and Louis (1998) argue that the whole school is influenced by an individual's learning while the individual can learn to a sophisticated stage without being influenced by the whole organisation. Yet Huysman (1999) claims that the individual's action is highly influenced by structural conditions such as institutional forces, organisational histories, cultures, group structures and power structures. Patterns such as organisational norms and values, environmental rules and beliefs impose prior constraints on the actions of individual members acting as active agents within the organisation. In addition, McMahon, (2003) and Stoll (2003) claim that effectiveness depends on people learning collaboratively, and is not achievable individually.

It is possible to further develop these points by relating to other works (Brown 1996; Dibbon 2000; Leithwood 2000) that suggest the following observations while highlighting the reciprocal relationship. With regard to *individual professional learning capacity*, the following organisational factors are observed to be influential: attitudes about individual professional learning, whether they are positive or negative within the organisation; the level of support that exists within and outside the school, whether or not school administrators become actively involved in the learning of their teachers; whether this learning occurs purely by chance or there are carefully designed

plans for individual learning and, lastly, whether the pursuit of learning is explicit or implicit. These researchers claim that organisations serve as ‘communities of practice’ for their members, to shape the nature of the knowledge considered functional for individuals. In its most fully developed state – *the learning organisation* – planned and formal educational experiences are conducted (Dibbon, 2000).

The reciprocal relation is further explained by Huysman (1999) when she refers to the concept of externalising. Cohen (1991) claims that teachers bring individually held knowledge from their prior experiences and training that is often difficult for colleagues to access and utilise. Externalising occurs when individual knowledge is shared among individuals by creating a shared vocabulary and incentives for discussion. This externalisation results in organisational knowledge, through the process of objectifying knowledge. Sharing the individually held knowledge makes it more meaningful when it becomes shared and can be practised. Consequently, internalising occurs when individual actors integrate this organisational knowledge into their personal belief system presumably influencing at least part of their behaviour. This observation may serve to complete the structure of ‘communities of practice’ suggested above.

There is a deep reciprocity between personal meaning and social shared meaning (Fullan, 2001). One contributes to the other... *the ultimate goal of change is when people see themselves as shareholders with a stake in the success of the system as a whole, with the pursuit of meaning as the elusive key* (p.272). The reciprocity between personal and social shared meaning is highly emphasised in PLCs. It is also emphasised in the context of knowledge utilisation. *De-privatization* of practice, as well as *collaboration* are important elements of it (Leithwood, and Louis 1998; Bollam et al. 2005).

Continuous professional development

Continuing professional development (PD) of teachers might represent the individual teacher as learner within an organisation. Bolam, cited in McMahon (2003, p. 598) defines professional development as: *an ongoing process of education, training, learning and support activities; taking place in either external or work-based settings; proactively engaged in by qualified, professional teachers, head teachers*

and other school leaders; aimed primarily at promoting learning and development of their professional knowledge, skills and values; helping them to decide on and implement valued changes in their teaching and leadership behaviour; enabling them to educate their students more effectively; achieving an agreed balance between individual, school and national needs. What should be the focus and content of development activities and how they should be provided are influenced by views about teachers as professionals. In school-based professional communities, where teachers can work more collaboratively, and have strong external connections to the wider environment of knowledge, they pursue a clear shared purpose and engage in professional dialogue which may result in an improvement in pupils' learning (Fullan, 2005; McMahon, 2003; Stoll, 2003). Moreover the PC supports its members and at the same time reinforces peer pressure and accountability on staff who may not have carried their fair share, as well as easing the burden on teachers who have worked hard in isolation (Louis 1996).

Nevertheless Joyce and Showers (1995) claim that professional development that relies on internally generated collaboration through self-review – empowers teachers, but it has its limitation: teachers may not possess the knowledge or skills to develop each other effectively; they may not be able to identify their own developmental needs. A climate of comfortable collaboration may develop and inhibit challenge or, as Hargreaves (1996) suggested, can create “balkanization”, and therefore inhibit a process of improvement particularly if it is an externally initiated change. These warnings correspond with the emphasis of Hargreaves et al. (2001) on the need to give the teachers the opportunities to understand the changes they were supposed to be practising, as well as the important role of external support and internal structures for learning.

Two of the above ideas are interwoven into the frame of building capacity from outside recommended by Stoll and Earl (2003). They emphasise the role of systems in supporting professional growth by helping schools to develop as learning communities, where *‘educators collaborate to inquire critically about their own practice’* (p. 501). The same ideas are strengthened by Hopkins (2001) who identifies the principles underpinning authentic school improvement. Two of the principles are: *‘capacity building in nature’* and *‘enquiry driven’*. Detailing the examples that

influence school improvement, he mentions: the necessity to ensure sustainability, the nurturing of professional learning communities and the establishing of local infrastructures and networks. The uses of data to energise, inform and direct action, the influence of the 'reflective practitioner' ethic and a commitment to dissemination and utilisation. The centrality of inquiry is emphasised by Louis and Kruse (1998) in the context of writing about the collaborative work which is grounded in a 'reflective dialogue', in which staff conduct conversations about students and teaching and learning, identifying related issues and problems. In the case of Meytzav, the externally provided information might be one more source for these conversations and the fact that the data was collected on site at the school by an external body as well as processed by them, might make it a valuable source of information. Sergiovanni (1994) refers to these activities as *inquiry*, which promotes the creation of a learning community:

Inquiry forces debate among teachers about what is important. Inquiry promotes understanding and appreciation for the work of others. . . . and inquiry helps principals and teachers create the ties that bond them together as a special group and that bind them to a shared set of ideas. Inquiry, in other words, helps principals and teachers become a community of learners (p. 154).

Organisational Learning and Professional Learning Communities

Harris (2001) suggests that capacity building is concerned with '*creating the conditions, opportunities and experiences for collaboration and mutual learning*' (p.262). The diverse human and technical resources of a school need to be put to use in an organized, collective enterprise. Moreover, in a data-driven society, claims Fullan (2005), these conditions might include system mechanisms for acting on data. Professional learning communities might provide one of these structures, system mechanisms, within which to create the necessary conditions and opportunities in schools.

Organisational learning is a strategy used to meet challenging and ever-changing environments, to facilitate innovation and high performance (Argyris 1993; Leithwood et al. 1998; Marks et al. 2000). In order to reflect on how and when

dynamic forms of organizational learning may result in effective and positive change, *we paradoxically turn to the source of organizational stability in schools: that is professional community* (Leithwood and Louis, 1998, p. 279).

Since schools face uncertain, changing circumstances it is argued that they have to learn adaptive responses. The external information that is provided to schools within the procedure of the external evaluation might unbalance its routine and become a factor in changing its circumstances. Organisational learning might emerge where there is a mismatch between what is expected and what actually happens. The triggering event might happen within or beyond the school. Professional Learning Communities though, do not 'emerge' or need a 'triggering' event, they are a phenomenon that each school has to strive for, where people are continually learning (Hopkins, 2001; Stoll et al. 2003; Fullan, 2005). Nevertheless, it is also claimed that organisational learning might become a 'state of mind' for an organisation pursuing self-reflection and improvement. Argyris and Schon (1978) point out that where learning is a habit of mind, an organisation works efficiently, readily adapts to change, and continually improves. Suggesting that organisations nowadays are processes and relationships rather than structures and sets of rules, with conversation as the central medium for the creation of both individual meaning and organisational change, Mitchell, Sackney and Walker (1997) add that organisational learning seems like a promising response to the continuing demands for restructuring. At this early stage it is already possible to recognize that these two notions (OL and the PLC) are closely related and in some senses it is not possible to speak about the one without mentioning the other. They emerge under the same set of conditions, though it might be that in a PLC the concept of 'professional learning' differentiates it to an extent from OL, as claimed by Leithwood and Louis (1998): *'the idea of a professional community...incorporates a strong emphasis on the professionalization of teachers' work through increasing expert knowledge'* (p.279). But in more recent writings Louis (2006) claims that the overlap between professional communities (a set of social relationships that create a culture of shared responsibility for student learning) and organizational learning (which emphasizes social processes for acquiring and sharing knowledge that can change a group's understanding and practice) has become clearly intertwined in the educational literature. Within the frame of this study I

choose to present them as combined, interwoven manner so that it will be possible to highlight similarities between them as well as the unique emphases of each.

Definitions

Organisational Learning (OL) is composed of the two concepts 'organisation' and 'learning'. Basically the former implies a context while the latter implies a process.

Researchers argue that OL is distinct from individual learning (Hedber 1981; Fiol 1985; Huysman 1999). Some contributors to the learning organisation perspective take 'organisational' as referring to the site of learning. In such cases, a learning organisation is one that creates structures and strategies to facilitate the learning of all its members (Senge 1990). Others consider OL as a metaphor (Argyris and Schon, 1978). They suggest that the individual theories have to be encoded in organisational theories in order to promote organisational learning. These two perspectives are incorporated in the notion of PLC because among its key characteristics are '*individual and collective professional learning*', '*learning of all*' and '*creating the structures and strategies to facilitate learning*' (Stoll 2003; Bolam 2005).

Argyris and Schon (1978) define OL as

...An organisation's capacity for conscious transformation of its own theory of action, and individuals' ability to appreciate and transform the learning systems in which they live" so "that they will be able to detect and correct errors...knowing the limits of their innovation" (Argyris 1993, p.1).

A working definition is suggested by Bolam et al. (2005) for an effective professional learning community:

An effective professional learning community has the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing pupil learning (p.2).

A comparison of these two definitions suggests that OL is about transformation while PLC is about sustained learning, that OL is about appreciation and transformation of

the learning systems while PLC is about enhancing students' learning rather than transformation as such.

Nevertheless, to be worth our attention, OL must result in some things that are of consequence for schools. These are likely to be individual and collective understandings, skills, commitments, and overt practices resulting from OL. Such outcomes are assumed to mediate the effects of the schools' learning on student growth (Leithwood 2000). This is the point where these two definitions meet. Similarly in PLC cooperative relations among adults who share common purposes for both adults and students is organized in ways which foster commitment among its members (Sergiovanni 1994; Bryk 1998).

Three units for learning are identified (Leithwood 1998; Mulford 1998; Dibbon 2000; Leithwood 2000) in OL and PLC, including: *the learning of individuals, the learning that occurs across organisations as a whole*, and highly emphasised in the PLC – *learning by networking, and partnerships across schools and the external connections to the wider environment of knowledge*. PLC actively engages its staff, its parents, pupils and the wider community in learning that enhances the organisation's purposes while not forgetting the power of learning from a wider group of peers within the school and across schools. *Inclusive membership* is one of its key characteristics (Stoll et al. 2001; Stoll, 2003; Bollam et al. 2005; Fullan, 2005). Both OL and PLC are about the teachers as learners, and processes of learning, within and across schools. Both might facilitate knowledge utilisation and provide the framework for it. However, the emphasis in PLC is on the community aspect and this includes openness, mutual trust and respect (Sergiovanni, 1994; Collarbone, 2003). In a stable *professional community* where risk-taking behaviours are needed, developing of cohesive and trusting relationships among teachers is a precondition (Hargreaves, 1991; Myerson et al., 1996). The same issue of trust is highly emphasised by Louis (2006), who claims that trust is a precondition for developing PLCs, but few schools have confronted the issue of how to improve this component.

Rosenholtz (1989) warns that these experiences either reinforce or change people's behaviour, so that the result is not necessarily change or "doing something new". Nevertheless with being engaged in processes of OL, even if the result reinforces

behaviour this behaviour becomes more conscious, gains sophistication, and probably becomes more efficient. So even if behaviours don't change, improvement is involved.

Argyris and Schon (1996) claim that organisations succeed if they learn to *see* things in new ways, gain *fresh* understandings, and *innovate* throughout on a *continuing basis*. New knowledge that is provided to schools might initiate, or energize, these processes.

Organisational learning enhances the school's ability for self-organisation, enabling organisation members to work together *to restructure, reculture, and otherwise reorient themselves to new challenges* (Leithwood, Leonard, and Sharratt, 2000, p. 103). Writing about PLC Fullan (2005) sets up similar requirements: '*structure is not enough....you have to couple reculturing and restructuring*' (p. 69). This point might be strengthened by referring to the levels of learning suggested by Argyris and Schon (1978) represented as single-loop and double-loop learning, or in Simon's (1991) clarifying distinction: *I distinguish sharply between learning that brings new knowledge to bear within an existing culture and knowledge that changes the culture itself in fundamental ways* (p. 131–132). The same processes can lead to both levels of learning, depending on the quality of each variable of the process and the quality of interdependency among them. Yet, it is argued that improvement is intended to transform the 'culture' of schools (Hopkins, 2001). Consequently OL and PLC that lead to improvement appear to grasp double-loop learning, which results in changes in the culture itself.

Limitations and constraints

While the literature dealing with teachers' learning in schools tends to be affirmative, there are some issues which suggest contra-indications to the prevailing tendency.

Continuous Improvement – There is the danger of *constant improvement* without any value given to heritage, continuity and tradition (Fullan 1993; Hargreaves 1997; Huysman 1999). Both change and stability are required although changes that are too frequent inhibit learning (Huysman, 1999). The dramatic learning moments in schools should be balanced with more continuous and organized efforts to learn, that may

contribute to improved student achievement without requiring transformation (King et al. 2003).

The connectedness between learning and improvement is not straightforward – The idea of creating a straightforward linkage between OL and improvement is confronted by Huysman (1999) in illustrating the *improvement bias*. She claims that defining learning in outcomes terms – ‘for improvement’ – rather than in process terms has as a tacit assumption the principle that learning always results in improvement. She points out that a learning outcome might well be conservatism, because of incomplete learning cycles, the inability to think in wholes instead of pieces, a self-referential use of information, or a defensive tendency among organisational members to protect themselves from open confrontation and criticism. When improvement is referred to as an outcome of learning, she claims, other outcomes of the same process are overlooked. The outcome of learning remains one of investigation, and it leads somewhere, not necessarily to improvement. What is considered as improvement in one organisation is not necessarily considered to be improvement in another one.

A cultural dimension – it is clear that OL, or creating a PLC, is not a whole package which can be adopted by any culture at any time. Contextual differences have been referred to elsewhere. Each place/institution has to be alert and examine carefully the right combination for its own OL (Mulford 1998; Mortimore 2000).

Micropolitical limitations – Mulford (1998) argues that OL might favour the most literate and articulate members of the organisation and thus refer to only a limited group of people. According to Hargreaves (1994) there could be a complex organisation with no shared culture. Despite the fact that group learning leads to necessary preparation and application of skills to overcome existing challenges, it has its limitations and might be counterproductive. Some forms of cohesiveness are desirable for team learning; others are destructive (Leithwood K. Jantzi D. and Steinbach R., 2000). Cohesiveness can be destructive when, for example, there are common feelings of distrust and discontent or exaggerated importance given to the consensus-based aspects of human relationships. Where there is a ‘contrived collegiality’ (Hargreaves, 1994) destructive cohesiveness may occur. Although organisational learning is based on the ‘*involvement of all*’, a real involvement of all

at the same level is complicated and might not be possible. Therefore in many cases organizational learning can be a fragmented and disconnected process. Subgroups learn at different levels and in different ways. Furthermore, King et al. (1998) suggest that there is a temporal dissociation between deep learning and action that may limit the value of formal '*learning interventions*' under some circumstances.

Ben Peretz and Schonman (1998) suggest that norms which are part of a school culture and govern teachers' behaviour have an effect on social interactions, which themselves serve as powerful sources of individual and collective professional learning. As mentioned above, some goals of OL are processing, creating, and using strategic knowledge, creating collective knowledge, developing learning-oriented cultural norms, and relating the information gathered from the environment to the operating norms that guide current behaviour (Reed and Stoll, 2000). Norms are the windows into the deeply-held beliefs, values and culture of the school (Stoll 1999). Relating the information to operating norms might change norms or enhance them though reinforcing or changing parts of the school's culture.

School culture, context and knowledge utilisation

Whereas any improvement process is intended to transform the culture of schools (Hopkins, 2001), when the school structure is changing while the school culture does not, the danger of short-lived and superficial changes is real (Stoll and Wikeley, 1998). As the school is the focus for change, researchers make a strong claim for the importance of school culture and context. If it is ignored, the potential for improvement will never be fulfilled and if it does it will never be sustained. Organisational culture is about '*the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one known group from another. It is the values, norms, beliefs and customs that an individual holds in common with members of the social unit or group*' (Prosser, 1999; p.42). It reflects the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs. It is taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and the school culture is shaped by the way this group of people learns to cope with those problems (Schein 1985), and by the school's history, context, and the people in it (Stoll, 1999). Having a school culture that favours change, where the school itself takes charge of

the process of changes, seems to be a crucial element in the improvement setting (Creemers et al. 2000), as collaborative cultures of inquiry move school systems in the direction of deep learning (Fullan, 2005). Moreover, organisations that are more effective in using knowledge have certain characteristics. For example, they have denser internal communication networks, and more individuals serve in boundary spanning roles where they legitimately bring in new ideas from the outside. Organisations that don't learn are characterized by internal boundaries, competition, excessive individual entrepreneurship, and lack of continuity in personnel (Louis Seashore K. & Kruse S. 1998; Fullan 2001).

In order to build the right climate for learning it is critical, claim Stoll, Fink and Earl (2003), to handle the complexities of emotional life, and on the other hand to be engaged in inquiry, questioning and challenging ideas, perceptions and beliefs, thus fostering creativity. It is crucial to devote sufficient time to all these processes. To the same end, MacGilchrist et al (1997) indicate that there are collective capacities to enable schools to achieve their goals successfully. This involves the use of wisdom, insight, intuition and experience as well as knowledge, skills and understandings. Organisational learning and professional learning communities provide the structures, and use the processes that might facilitate capacity building for knowledge utilisation.

However, the internal forces and the internal politics and power relations are not less complicated, and are similarly influential when it involves reform and change. It will be argued that in a case of external improvement initiative, as where Meytzav is involved, the interplay of power and politics is particularly complex.

Greene (1988) suggests that the involvement of practitioners has to be reflected in conceptual change, which occurs through active discussion with colleagues of diverse perspectives. Changes reflect the beliefs of people in school or outside that something needs changing and the will to see it through. Successful changes emerge from engagement with ideas and personal growth. The more successful schools appear to have a 'can do' attitude that carries them forward. This attitude is a part of the 'readiness' state that was mentioned earlier.

Micro-politics within school involves practitioners: leaders and teachers' communities. Usually there is a variety of perceptions of the reform/the external initiative and its consequences as well as a range of approaches to sustaining implementation. In any one school teachers may be 'for' and 'against' adaptation of the new practices. Teachers raise problems such as how the new initiative will fit in with existing schooling routines. Participants must work on implementation and make it coincide with the current processes in school, developing teachers' ownership of the process as part of external initiative implementation and sustained improvement. The importance of the source of motivation and the faith in local change efforts are at stake. Unification of effort for change might become part of the culture of school (Greene 1988; Stoll 1996).

The above implies that it is not enough to convince teachers to go along with an external initiative, being neither sure that their attitude will be sustained over the long term nor convinced that "quick fixes" will last. Disagreement can exist regarding the initiative itself, its necessity or its relevance to local context as well as its translation into action. The contextual factors such as micro-political interactions and informal negotiations of power in schools, and the uniqueness of the individual setting are of great importance in understanding these processes (Fullan 1992).

Datnow (2000) suggests some prerequisites to create the right environment to encourage genuine staff within a change process: the external reform has to be a part of an overall, long-term plan for school change. Planning and managing change gives the institution some control over what is happening (Fullan, 2001).

Because the concern of this study is to provide a greater understanding of what helps, and what constrains, schools' use of information as a reflective source for improvement – what helps and what constrains schools' capacity for knowledge utilisation – the third category mentioned above, has to be explored. This is the external context.

The external context – power and politics

Chapman (2000) suggests: "*improvement is generated from within and is not a top-down approach to change*" (p.58). To the same end Hopkins (1994) argues that in any

approach that promotes external improvement initiatives, a set of assumptions about people is inherent: someone outside knows how they feel, how they should behave, and how organisations work: *'It is an approach that encourages someone to do something to someone else: it is about control rather than growth'* (p.3). Dibbon (2000) adds that when a district legislates a change in teaching practice, individuals may feel forced to change their behaviour to comply with the new regulation. Their belief that the old way is better, however, does not necessarily change, and the life cycle of such a change might therefore be limited. Moreover, newly acquired inspection\evaluation schemes, external improvement initiatives, enforce the agenda for school improvement by concentrating on raising test performances on a narrow range of student outcomes. The result is that wider issues are being kept in the background (Smith, 2006). Consequently the curriculum is being narrowed. If that is so, the phrase 'external improvement initiative' (represented for the purpose of this study by Meytzav) has a contradiction within itself, and has to be critically investigated.

In contrast to the above, researchers (Stringfield 1997; Slavin 1998; Herman 1999) have found that several externally developed reforms had the potential to improve academic achievement in various settings, and students tended to make greater academic gains than in locally developed programmes. Yet it has to be emphasized that these researchers focused on academic achievement, and improvement has a much wider scope. What happens to these reforms when they have met the internal setting requires further examination. What processes did they go through before being adopted?

In the introduction to this study the aspects of evaluation serving the interrelated needs of improvement, accountability, understanding, professionalism and control have been presented. In this thesis the external scheme of evaluation which acts as the source material – effectively the “data provider” – does not explicitly demand accountability. Its declared aim is to facilitate improvement at schools by providing them with relevant data based on information collected from them beforehand and later fed back to them. However, this scheme of evaluation is obligatory, and schools are expected to work through it and use the findings for their improvement. It shares features of externally initiated reform, therefore the literature referring to such

reforms and to external improvement initiatives is relevant. External and internal power relations are inherent to organizational processes; thus they perform a part of the influences on successful knowledge utilisation. . The influence of external forces is twofold: on the one hand it can promote change; on the other it can inhibit the same tendencies. Politics is about acquiring and using power and influence. At its worst, school politics makes a school dysfunctional. At its best it interacts positively to advance the organisation's purposes. In order to ensure that political activity becomes positive its existence has to be recognised; then if needed, leaders can redirect this energy into productive activities (Stoll and Myers 1998).

Discussing how and why schools adopt reforms, and the consequences of those processes for reform implementation and sustainability, Datnow (2000) raises the micropolitical perspective. She implies that there is a need for genuine interest at local level while arguing that power relations often motivate initial buy-in interest in change as well as initial motivation in the implementation efforts. The need to adopt any externally developed reform design frequently derives from social and political pressures. Among those may be included low student achievement, strong systems of accountability, and growing dissatisfaction with the school's functioning. There is almost no possible way to draw the exact border: where does the external interest start or end, and where does the internal interest start?

An externally developed reform design supposedly allows a school to combat public pressures and accountability measures, as it does what it is expected to, without having to "reinvent the wheel". The question arises: is it an external interest or an internal one? On the surface this process requires less effort and definitely less struggle with external authorities; on the contrary, it makes it easier to garner resources for the impetus towards change (Datnow, 2000). Relationships among the reform promoters and the reform adopters, however, are complex. It might be that this is one of the reasons for Fullan (2005) to claim that '*centrally driven reforms can be a necessary first start...but can never carry the day of sustainability*' (p. 7).

The difference between supporting and mandating a reform has to be clear; there is a need to expand time and knowledge for schools before taking decisions about external initiatives and genuinely increasing the level of teacher involvement in their adoption.

Teachers in school should carry out a critical inquiry process, so the frame of reference for the adoption of the reform at the specific school will be clear, and teachers' ownership of the process will increase (Datnow, 2000). Building on local practitioners' readiness to disseminate and integrate the external source(s) of information, are among those cultural characteristics which promote real improvement. But, claims Fullan (2005), although some stress is essential in order to push towards change, under stressful conditions, individuals and groups are more likely to withdraw.

Trying to find out the motivations for school readiness to choose to get started and to sustain an external improvement initiative, external power relations interweave with the internal ones. Hierarchical power relations between schools and districts or other powerful external bodies, which include inducements materialised in funding, may shape head teachers' attitudes towards encouraging their staff to adopt a specific reform mandated by the district. On the other hand, a different perception of the reform and its variables might co-exist among the people involved i.e. the head teachers and the district administrators. The consequences of this fact vary. When head teachers are placed in a tug-of-war between district administrators and their teachers, they might appease the more powerful actors in this equation – the district office. Compliance might be a factor in these relationships to the extent that it supersedes the need to evaluate the appropriateness of a reform to a school's needs. On the other hand, external support might be an essential factor in combating hardship integrated into a head teacher's position, if for example, the external support is coherent to her/his own perceptions but contradicts the perceptions of some influential staff members. A head teacher might find assistance and support for her/his own approach in an external initiative (Stoll 1998) and see the external initiative as a means of furthering her own aspirations. In addition more successful leaders have also been found to 'colonise' external reform to fit their own ends (National Commission on Education, 1995, cited in: Stoll, 2003). Even the concept of compliance cannot be related to as straightforward: if local educators feel forced by external power to adopt a reform, they might use their external compliance just in order to retain autonomy, securing additional resources and legitimacy. Bennett (2003) suggests a further distinction: 'cognitive compliance', he claims, might be when the person is persuaded that what is being required is correct, or 'instrumental compliance', which rests purely

on a calculation of benefits and disadvantages. Wilcox and Gray (1996) found that as clear as the vision of the head teacher was, if it did not coincide with the external initiative frame s/he was less influenced by its recommendations for improvement.

From the teachers' point of view, they describe themselves as having participated in the reform adoption process when their ideologies match the reform understandings (Weick 1995).

While a strong push at district level might lead few educators to question whether or not they need to reform, and why so, it does initiate a process of reflection. This reflection does not necessarily result in a better implementation; they could conclude that the problems are external, or conduct superficial change.

The constant incompatibility between *accountability and empowerment* lies at the heart of the relationship between schools and their outside environment where there still exists the unsolved problem of the limits of *centralization and decentralization*, finding the right balance of *empowerment and accountability* and the problem of *procedural illusions* of effectiveness (Mulford, 1998). Furthermore, Cooper (1988) in her paper 'Whose culture is it anyway?' warns of the possibility of creating a culture which is received by teachers instead of being created by them, where the teachers are told what it means to be professional, and who they have to collaborate with. This might cause teachers to implement purposes devised by others. Within this framework it is almost impossible to ignore Hargreaves's (1994) call for balance between individuality and group pressure.

The community

The local community, broader community, political action and 'tone' might also affect external contextual influences (Stoll 1999). Among other influences, Stoll and Earl (2003) mention the attitude of the broader community to schooling and how it can affect teachers' motivation and belief that what they are doing is worthwhile, the bombardment of unrelenting changes that exhaust teachers and the fast-changing world that requires a high level of schools' internal capacity so that schools will be able to respond to it. Investigating the consequences of an external evaluation initiative at schools, brings the relationships between external forces and the school

itself into focus as part of this research. However, it has been noted that the school level and the classroom/teacher level are reciprocally related; the school level and the classroom/teacher level are influenced directly by the context level, while the opposite is not so (Reezigt 2001). Still, the school has the potential to become the source of its community's values, language, history, and culture (Caldwell 1998).

The external context and support structures

The accessibility of the professional learning infrastructure and networks located in a school's area might influence the relations of the school with its local community. Expanding on the intelligent use of external support agencies, Hopkins (2001) and Fullan (2001) stress the role of external context as an influence on capacity and a part of capacity building. External context networks of learning, which offer open and interactive connections with communities such as parents, other schools, businesses, and media, may serve as supporting structures (Fullan 2001; MacBeath 2001; Stoll 2003).

It is argued that these networks can have 'loose' or firm agendas as long as they give people the opportunity to meet and talk, thereby establishing a support network for disseminating examples of successful intervention among schools (Clarke 1999). Bryk et al. (1998) present a further role for the external community – to become advocates for local schools by a new capacity-building external to the school, namely the establishment of 'the extra-school infrastructure' with the aim of promoting improvement.

The need to interact with both internal and external contexts doesn't contradict the requirements stated earlier for knowledge to be developed in its context. The source of information might be found in both environments while the transfer of knowledge, its interpretation, dissemination and implementation are being done on site.

Summary

In the literature review, the main concept 'knowledge utilisation', which is the core focus of this study, was presented. It was claimed that a sophisticated knowledge utilisation might be a sensible strategy for those committed to the change and improvement of schools: it can ameliorate the weaknesses inherent in adopting typical top-down approaches to change; it involves processes that would have as a goal facilitating access to knowledge from the environment through organisation members becoming responsible for their implementation and for generating their own knowledge; simultaneously, it might serve the goals of the knowledge providers, in transforming the knowledge into usable knowledge. The rest of the literature review was concerned with possible influences on processes of knowledge utilisation. These were grouped into three categories: the source of the knowledge, aspects of the setting in which it is utilised and external influences.

It is worthwhile to explore these influences at schools, because it might thereby become possible to suggest what parts of these have to be enhanced in order to facilitate knowledge utilisation. Building schools' capacity for knowledge utilisation will enhance their capacity to deal with external initiatives for change and by implication promote their capacity for change and improvement.

The circular structure of a successful knowledge utilisation might manifest itself in the extent to which a school can sustain learning, build its capacity for knowledge utilisation, and become aware of its own limits and its need for further capacity to be built by processes of learning in order to improve. The externally provided information can be a trigger for these processes. It has been argued that increasing the capacity for knowledge utilisation might be at the same time one aim of, and the means for, improvement. This study, then, sets out to examine what is implied in a school's capacity to improve by the use it makes of external evaluation information, externally provided information.

Methodology

Introduction

The considerations presented in the introduction to this study and the literature review that followed led to the following major research question:

What does a school's use of external evaluation information imply about its capacity to improve?

The component factors in this research question are:

1. How does a school use the information created by an external evaluation process and to what extent does this change over time?
2. What impact, if at all, does the use of external evaluation information have on the school?
3. How is this affected by factors within the individual school context?

The research question presented above, with the component factors included, sets out to reveal an institution's culture and its developmental processes within a certain frame of place and time, and the place of human behaviour, beliefs and thoughts in it. It adopts a longitudinal approach in examining the relationships among in-school attributes, and between these attributes and externally provided information, over a period of three years.

The nexus of all these elements is the use by a school of the external evaluation report compiled on it by the Ministry of Education. What happens 'when the report meets the school' is the concern of this research. Attributes of the school and the report, the interconnection between these, and how all this helps in understanding a school's capacity to improve, provide the substance of the research. While the structure of each school reflects different and complex contextual characteristics, the report has the

same structure in all schools, however varied its information might be. It is the different ways in which different schools use the report that makes its impact different in each case and which carries implications for that school's capacity to improve.

This methodology chapter starts by establishing the conceptual framework for the study that follows, and continuing by discussing the appropriate data collection methods. The choice of a case study approach will be explained while describing the measures that were taken in order to facilitate the collection of general data and in-depth data. Some comments concerning the research trustworthiness, and its ethical considerations, follows. The chapter ends with the coding procedure, based to a very limited extent on statistics but mainly on grounded theory.

The research paradigm

Qualitative inquiry relies on a descriptive theory and has the potential to capture and reflect beliefs, thoughts, cultures, and developmental processes (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) all of which are the concern of the following study. However, while using qualitative inquiry I couldn't ignore its liabilities – the limited ability to generalise and to prove the validity and the consistency of the findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Yin, 1985). Taking these problems into consideration, careful and strict planning, conducting and reporting of the research and seeking trustworthiness (Lincoln, 1985), were all actions which have been the model for this research. These actions will be further explained in the following sections.

One of the strategies that was used in the research, and which might help in tackling these liabilities, and expand understanding of the phenomenon by having a wealth of data (Stecher, 2002), is the use of mixed methodologies, qualitative and quantitative. Method triangulation as suggested by Brannen (1995), using different methods in relation to the same object of study, may produce different assessments of the situation at different times. The two researched phenomena of this research were the school and the report. The quantitative was subservient to the qualitative, in this case, in order to fulfil the function of providing quantified background data in which to

contextualize the small-scale intensive study. The quantitative work provided a basis for the sampling of the cases which form the intensive study⁸. This made it feasible to approach more schools in order to confirm the four selected schools as being typical, thereby offering, along the lines described by Swaffield and MacBeath (2006), a range of perspectives, and highlighting some of the challenges that schools face, within the framework of external evaluation in Israel. All of this might become possible by trying to capture different characteristics of each school and the different aspects of schooling in each of them.

The quantitative approach was also used in relation to the report of each school, the externally provided information. The report is comprised of quantitative measures⁹: the percentage of teachers and students who positively responded to a specific statement¹⁰. Pointing out the indicators in the Meytzav report that reflect a school's capacity to improve made it possible to identify this in the different schools. Furthermore, applying a longitudinal study, having three different reports from three successive years for each school, made it possible to relate to their capacity within a time perspective. As opposed to human behaviour and institutional 'behaviour' (culture), which are best explored by qualitative methodology, the information in the report is presented mainly by graphs and numbers, which makes it approachable by quantitative investigation. The combination between these two paradigms provides a sound basis for investigation, with the one (quantitative) approach underpinning the other (qualitative), while each addresses a specific area of the investigation: the quantitative approach is applied to the external information which is provided to schools based on data that was collected beforehand at the same school (Meytzav reports), while the qualitative approach is applied to the response and implementation processes to that report in each school, that is the in-depth investigation.

Lichtman and Taylor (1993) suggest that the qualitative approach should be used when a researcher wants to answer the questions '*how?*' and '*why?*' rather than

⁸ See appendix no. 4 for a comparison of the data with reference to the four case studies.

⁹ <http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Haaracha/Meitzav/> (examples can be read on the PP presentation, within the English explanation, slides no. 20–21)

¹⁰ For the topics which are explored by the external evaluation procedure see appendix no. 2.

‘what?’ and *‘how much?’*. In the case of my research I am seeking to answer both *how* the school uses the report and *why* they do so, as well as *under what circumstances* it is used and to what extent (*‘how much’*), if at all, it influences the school’s capacity for knowledge utilisation and, by implication, its capacity to improve.

Being a study of human behaviour in a certain place at a certain time (Stake, 1994, 2000) and within certain circumstances, a case study approach seemed to be the appropriate one for this study. The research questions might be answered by using different lenses: the sociological view for studying the context, the managerial view for better understanding of systems and the psychological view for investigating behaviours.

A sociological view might provide the framework to define the context; a school’s culture which is an internal context is embedded in an external context. Both are the subjects of investigation when looking for the impact of external evaluation data use on different schools’ capacity to deal with change and to improve. With a managerial view, investigating the case studies of particular schools helps to understand the systems and identify differences among them, differences that might influence the extent of the implementation of external evaluation information. The psychological view might help to carry out the in-depth case study investigation so as better to understand the influence of the perceptions, emotions and beliefs of individuals. It is from these perceptions, emotions and beliefs that the different aspects of their capacity to improve, and their ways of using externally provided information are created.

In the literature review the emphasis on the uniqueness of each case is evident, although a multiple approach could show similarities among cases.

Incorporating case studies within a multiple study approach

This research, then, is about the particular, the unique, in each case. It refers to a contemporary phenomenon within a ‘real life’ context, while the boundaries between

the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, as in real life. The case study method facilitates the coverage of contextual conditions considering them as pertinent to the phenomenon under study (Yin 2003). Because the situation is comprised of many more different variables of interest than data points, multiple sources of evidence are used and the data collection and analysis benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions. This way of inquiry benefits from its ability to recognise the complexity and 'embeddedness' of social truths and is capable of offering some support to alternative interpretations, it begins at the world of action and contributes to it (Bassey, 1999).

I used an instrumental, collective case study: I made the cases/the schools the basis of understanding a phenomenon which is beyond the case itself (Denzin 1994). It is an educational case study which tries to understand an educational action and to enrich the thinking and discourse of educators (Stenhouse, 1985).

A case study which involves an in-depth investigation, calls for a broad perception in order to enlarge, deepen and arrive at a better understanding of the data. Based on the constructivist approach that recommends using measures of different kinds while investigating an educational phenomenon and widening its scope by relating to different perspectives (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), a variety of measures were used and a variety of participants were approached. Interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documentation were used for triangulation, to strengthen trustworthiness. The information that emerged from these measures was regarded as complementary. Using this variety of measures integrated subjective (and more objective), structured (and less structured), sources. Head teachers' SMTs' and teachers' perceptions were collected.

Why multiple cases?

The use of several cases/schools is based on the assumption that at least some of the findings will repeat themselves and provide a sounder evidence base (Yin, 1993). For this reason in the following research each case is first described and analysed for itself before cross-analysis of all cases is undertaken.

Although it is argued that the goal of generalization is inappropriate for qualitative studies (Denzin, 1983; Guba and Lincoln, 1989) this question does not go away. We would like to know something about the relevance or applicability of our findings to other similar settings. So although the ability to generalise is not the aim of a case study, Jary and Jary (1991) argue that investigating a phenomenon by using the case study approach might explain broader phenomena and might serve as the basis for a wider argument. Yin (2003) is very decisive about the advantages of multiple-case designs over single-case designs. He sees its main benefit in the analytic aspect. Analytic conclusions which might independently arise from more than one case will be more powerful, he argues. As the context of each case is different, to an extent, the external generalisability of the findings might be expanded by arriving at common conclusions.

A second more fundamental reason for cross case analysis is to deepen understanding and explanation (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Multiple cases not only pin down the specific conditions under which a finding will occur, Miles and Huberman (op cit.) argue, but also help us form the more general categories of how those conditions may be related. To the same end Silverstein (1988) argues that we are faced with the tension between the particular and the universal: reconciling an individual case's uniqueness with the need for more general understanding of generic processes that occur across cases. In the case of the current research, although each school has its unique context, all schools receive the information from the same source by the same procedure; all must respond to some obligatory requirements, and all are subject to similar external influences and expectations, such as those generated by public opinion and the mass media which might influence processes in them. So the following research uses multiple case study design but at the same time takes into consideration Stake's (1995) reservation of generalisation mentioned in Bassey (1999). The real business, he argues, of case study is particularization while the function of the qualitative researcher during data gathering is to maintain vigorous interpretation and at the same time be patient, reflective, willing to see another view of the case "*an ethic of caution is not contradictory to an ethic of interpretation*" (Bassey, 1999; p. 33). To keep an ethic of caution the following considerations were applied.

The quality of the research design

In terms of maintaining quality, the following two points of view seem to be highly important; that of the researcher and his/her place in the qualitative research, and that of the procedures that were developed in order to help maintain quality within this methodology.

The place of the researcher

It has been argued that by using qualitative methodology the researcher becomes in a sense a part of the place where the research is conducted furthermore s/he is one of the main research instruments (Yossifun, 2001; Patton, 2001). These assumptions call for attention at all phases of research: its design, the data collection and the data interpretation.

As mentioned in the introduction to this study (p. 9), my interest in this research originated from the post I held between the years 1998-2001 in the Ministry's Evaluation Department, the department that carried out nation-wide evaluation processes. Shortly after having started the current research I left this post. Working at the office of the Evaluation Department had carried with it advantages as well as disadvantages. My access to the people involved, notable policy-makers and others in senior positions, was made easier. On the other hand, having experienced the external evaluation procedure at first hand I developed my own doubts concerning this procedure and the consequences expected, indeed desired, at schools. In fact, these doubts which aroused my interest in carrying out the present research. This sequence of events brought with it its own danger – that my research would become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Yet, being aware of the danger and of the factors which contributed to it was, at least to an extent, one way to overcome it. Furthermore, I consciously allowed myself to be open to surprises and unexpected events (Johnson, 1997) and in this way tried to balance the inherent bias.

While collecting data it was necessary to take into consideration the fact that the participants' way of thinking and/or behaviour might change due to their awareness of being researched, and that their description might be biased to an extent by the will to please me as an outsider. To this end Kirk and Miller (1986) stress the researcher's

need to be attentive to her participants. This skill made it possible to try and distinguish between authentic responses as opposed to their 'desirable' responses and to be able to step beyond the questions' borders and investigate new points of view. The semi-structured interviews, and the observations (carried out in as far as possible in their natural setting), made it feasible to avoid as much as possible imposing my own values and beliefs, and by using this approach as well as probing questions within the pilot process, I hope that bias was restricted though not totally avoided.

As described above, due to the circumstances surrounding the process of data analysis there was a danger of incorporating a personal point of view which could well be typical of a person who might be involved with the system s/he works in. Therefore I had to be reflective about my own perceptions and put them aside. This was done at all stages. While developing some of the research instruments, four separate colleagues were asked to examine concepts used in the statements of the questionnaire. All statements that did not receive full approval from at least three colleagues were omitted (The process is described under the section of Developing the Research Instruments). Throughout the research process I conducted an internal dialogue between my own theoretical and practical knowledge and the emerging patterns in the researched phenomena. This dialogue sometimes required further theoretical knowledge and reconsideration of the practical knowledge. Furthermore, the dialogue with the participants of the research kept me from imposing my own perceptions on the data.

But since some of the data, as Knight (2002) claims, reflects only the researcher's inferences, it was important to remain aware of the fact that qualitative research is interpretative in nature.

Issues of trustworthiness

Several procedures were developed to help maintain the quality of the research. The nature of knowledge within the rationalistic (or quantitative) paradigm is different from the nature of knowledge in the naturalistic (qualitative) paradigm. Since each paradigm requires paradigm-specific criteria, “rigour” is the term referring to the rationalistic paradigm and its counterpart “trustworthiness” refers to the naturalistic paradigm. In their work of the 1980s, Guba and Lincoln substituted the terms reliability and validity with the parallel concept of “trustworthiness,” containing four aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). Similarly, Altheide & Johnson (1998) claim that reliability and validity were terms pertaining to the quantitative paradigm and were not pertinent to qualitative inquiry. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are all provide the lenses of evaluating a research design as well as to assess qualitative findings. They are believed to better reflect the assumptions and epistemology underlying qualitative research. Each of these will be discussed with reference to the current research.

Credibility

Credibility does not depend on sample size but on the richness of the information gathered and on the analytical abilities of the researcher (Patton, 1990). A full description of methods used to generate data and its documentation in the study, as well as use of quotes, allows the reader to exercise joint responsibility with the researcher in judging the evidence on which claims are based (Morgan and Drury, 2003). This in turn leaves an ‘auditable’ trail that can be followed by others. All of these measures were used in this research, so as to leave an ‘auditable’ trail.

In addition credibility can be enhanced through triangulation of data. In the case of this research, three types of triangulation were used: methods triangulation, qualitative and quantitative, data triangulation using a variety of instruments and approaching a variety of participants, and theory triangulation referring to multiple perspectives (sociological, psychological and managerial) to help interpret and explain the data.

Credibility of the research findings, the believability from the perspective of the study participants, may also be assessed by member checking into the findings that is, gaining feedback on results from the participants themselves. This is another strategy which was used in this research.

Transferability (or ‘extrapolation’ Patton, 1990)

This strategy depends on the degree of similarity between the research’s particular situations and the situations to which they are supposed to be transferred. As the researcher cannot specify the transferability of findings and can only provide sufficient information that can then be used by the reader to determine whether or not the findings are applicable to the new situation, I tried to provide sufficient information on existing research, on methods, contexts, and assumptions underlying the study, for this purpose.

Dependability

It shows the extent to which it is possible to rely on the collected data. One of the ways to enhance it is to use the same research instrument again and again. The observation of a similar event was used at each school, and many interviews sharing similar aims were carried out. Thus it was possible to identify repeated phenomena, and further possible to explore repeated procedures. A full description, used as part of the study under examination, was another way of enhancing dependability (Yin, 1989). As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), the action of ‘come and go’ was applied in the process of data analysis, checking the categorisation again and again, triangulating the data, finding connections between data that were collected by different instruments and giving up the data that emerged as non-dependable.

Neutrality or confirmability

Patton (1990) strives for ‘empathic neutrality’ – empathy towards the people one encounters, but neutrality towards the findings. A researcher who is neutral tries to be non-judgmental, and strives to report what is found in a balanced way. I was trying to keep up with Patton’s recommendations: being both empathic at the research site and as much as possible, neutral while reporting the findings.

Confirmability also refers to the extent that the research findings can be confirmed or corroborated by others. In the case of the current research, the theory/story as emerged from the findings was presented to the participants. They were asked whether or not they felt the image of their school that had emerged out of the data analysis 'made sense'. It also gave the participants an opportunity to reflect upon the findings and further explain them. As well as ensuring confirmability by letting the participants react to the findings, I arranged for two external assessors, both educators, to analyse part of the data. When their analyses were compared to the researcher's data analysis they were found to be very close.

Ethical considerations

'Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Therefore their code of ethics should be strict' (Stake 1994). Qualitative work generally, and case studies especially, share an intense interest in personal views and circumstances.

Receiving official authorization on January 2002 from 'HaMad'an Harashi'¹¹ at the Ministry of Education granting me permission to conduct the research was my first step towards entering schools and engaging with the staff.

In order to make the head teachers fully aware of the aims and character of the research an initial approval of the nature of my work was requested from each head teacher in the letter and questionnaire sent to the 33 schools¹². Of the nineteen who replied, ten gave their approval. Thus when I interviewed the nine head teachers¹³ I did so equipped with their approval of my undertaking to see the Meytzav reports applicable to their school, and indeed their approval of their school's participation in my research. Nevertheless, it is important to indicate that all head teachers were keen

¹¹ 'HaMad'an Harashi' is the department with responsibility for ethical considerations relating to educational research. No research in the field of education in Israel can be carried out without authorization by this department.

¹² See appendix no. 5

¹³ One of them had consistently ignored my calls so I was left with nine schools. For the interview see appendix no. 6

not to expose their students' achievements that appeared in the reports. Though I was permitted to read the report, I undertook not to use any of the information about student achievements.

Thus armed with overall approval from 'HaMad'an Harashi' and the participating head teachers, I was able to address more particular ethical considerations regarding my procedures in each school with its head teacher. To avoid risk of exposure and embarrassment, issues of measures for data collection were discussed with each one in advance. The pattern of meetings for interviews and observations, and its agenda, as well as the research schedule, were agreed with the head teachers before the visits to the school were carried out. So informed consent was gained, but only with head teachers. In some cases this emerged as a drawback in my visits to schools. A revised view of informed consent in which consent is negotiated at different points in the research cycle could have helped to tackle this liability.

The observations were non-participatory so as to maintain as objective a perspective as possible.

Issues of confidentiality were addressed in respect of information received from those participating in the research. At no stage was the identity of schools and their participants revealed; the findings were reported in an anonymous form. Guaranteeing confidentiality to all members of staff within the schools made it possible to gather information on the differing perspectives and roles of those working within, and with, schools. The head teacher cooperated with me in selecting the members of staff whom I would interview but care was taken to ensure that no individual teacher's comments could be identified, their responses being fed into the general data. Thus teachers' anonymity was ensured within each school. Any interviewee could read the data that emerged during the interview right after being interviewed, and require it to be amended, so not to let them feel exposed by what had been recorded.

With regard to the questionnaire, the head teacher had no role in selecting respondents, who were self-selected from among those members of staff attending the staff meeting, nor did she have access to the returned questionnaires.

It has already been argued above that the goal of generalisation is inappropriate for qualitative studies (Denzin, 1983; Guba and Lincoln 1989); in any case, the ability to generalise is not the aim of a case study. Consequent to the above rationale it was necessary to identify four non-representatives but fairly typical case study schools. The screening process which is described in the next section was chosen as the way to proceed.

The screening process – towards the four case study schools

The screening procedure had two aims: firstly, the aim of selecting the four case studies, and secondly, of better understanding the context of the new scheme of external evaluation. It was assumed that getting to know the context of the previous external evaluation scheme (Madarom) would facilitate the design of the in-depth research. Therefore the schools that were approached were schools that had taken part in a previous scheme of external evaluation that acted as the basis for Meytzav¹⁴. The aim was to find four schools with widely contrasting profiles but all generally typical rather than representative ones. The following steps were taken.

My starting point was 373 schools that had been included in the external evaluation scheme. Fifty of them emerged as qualifying according to a set of criteria shaped according to my personal experience and circumstances, namely elementary, non-religious schools, schools that were located within reasonable reach and so on. A list of these fifty schools was presented to the evaluated project's manager, who identified thirty-three of them as having a high enough profile to make them worth approaching for research purposes, and authorised me to approach them. He was saying: *"These are schools where you can learn something from the way they work"*.

¹⁴ Madarom was a project which was evaluated by a region-wide evaluation scheme that had been launched in 1997. Later in March 2000 the nation-wide evaluation, Meytzav, was based on the same scheme. So only 373 schools in one region of Israel had been part of the Madarom project (when Meytzav did not exist), but later all elementary and inter-mediate schools in Israel became part of Meytzav's evaluation scheme.

The second stage consisted of a written approach in the form of a questionnaire¹⁵ to each of the thirty-three head teachers requesting their cooperation in an on-going research project. The intention was to put together a profile of that school's characteristics, such as: head teacher's years of service, teacher turnover, number of teachers and students, socio-economic background of students, readiness to accept the external evaluation procedure, existence of structures for teachers' learning at school and their perceived contribution to the school capacity to improve. Nineteen head teachers responded: ten of these agreed to take part in the research and share their external reports with me¹⁶. The other nine head teachers were not willing to share the reports' findings with me, and/or did not agree to take part in an on-going research.

The third, and final, stage took place from January 2002 when initial semi structured interviews¹⁷ were carried out with each of the nine head teachers followed up by a reading of their external report, so as to establish the workable level of their capacity to improve (see table no. 1), based on the findings of those reports. The semi-structured interview aimed to get a genuine picture of the attitude of each school with reference to the external evaluation procedure, for example readiness to get involved (based on Fullan et al, 1990, see Chapter Two p. 29), dissemination procedures, the external evaluation relevance to the school, patterns of leadership at the school as reflected within the frame of the external evaluation procedure and consequent processes that were taken at the school, and the impact, if any, on the school. The questions in the interview were based on the literature review concerning the capacity for knowledge utilisation and the research questions.

Any documents that the head teacher thought that might help me to get to know the school better were welcomed at this stage, and I was equipped with schools' external evaluation reports, schools' action plans and schools' leaflets. This stage of investigation revealed a wide range of capacity to improve¹⁸ at each school, which might later make this research richer.

¹⁵ See appendix no. 5

¹⁶ One of them had consistently ignored my calls so I was left with nine schools.

¹⁷ See appendix no. 6

¹⁸ See table no. 1

Of the nine schools, four had just recently received the external Meytzav report¹⁹. In order to be able to conduct the research at the intended time I had to select my four case studies according to the existence of an up-to-date report at that school. This became the determining factor and, as a result, these four were chosen to be the case study schools. The rest of the research, the in-depth investigation, was carried out in these schools²⁰. It was accepted that as a result of their being a non-random sample, the ability to generalize from the findings would be restricted.

Inevitably, conducted as described, the screening process carried with it certain limitations:

- Although it was impossible to start the research without getting the project manager's approval to approach the schools, by my giving him the list of fifty schools to choose from, the sample became restricted. I probably lost some "failing" schools, and I definitely lost the schools which were less known to the manager. I could have gained useful information from the other schools, but for the purposes of this study I still had a wide variety of schools relating to the criteria that I was looking for.
- Another drawback emerged through some of the head teachers withholding their approval from participating in the research, so, to an extent, the case study schools are self-selected. It might be that several head teachers who refused to join the next stage or refused to expose their report's findings might have offered additional insights into the research, additional dimensions which would never be revealed.
- Approaching only the head teachers during this process has limited the information I gathered. I could have got more information and a more balanced 'picture' by approaching other members of staff. I should have allowed for the possibility that the head teachers would claim that there was high capacity to

¹⁹ As opposed to Madarom which was annual, Meytzav, the new scheme, was at that stage conducted every second year.

²⁰ For a general profile of the four case study schools see appendix no. 4.

improve among their staff members, given that they are usually responsible for most processes undertaken at the school.

- Furthermore, the schools' awareness of the use of the external report was likely to be increased by my involvement with it, and so cause a halo effect.

To deepen understanding, widen the scope of the research and ensuring trustworthiness, a variety of research instruments were used. The next section tries to capture the reasons for using these particular instruments and illustrate their development.

Development of research instruments

With the considerations mentioned above concerning the research questions, the chosen paradigm for conducting the research and the framework that was set out by the quality of the research and its ethical considerations, several research instruments were developed. These were: interviews, observations, multiple choice questionnaires, and documents reading. The plan was that the data would be built by being collected from a variety of participants: head teachers, teachers and SMT members.

Interviews²¹

Conducting semi-structured interviews with head teachers, senior management team and teachers (some of whom were met more than once), gave me the opportunity to get a variety of perspectives on the school including all the levels at which it functioned. Choosing semi-structured interviews rather than structured interviews produced an open dialogue which provided a flow of information and facilitated attentiveness to the topics that were raised and the changing directions that were needed (Yin, 1985). The advantages to my research of the semi-structured interview were taken into consideration at all stages: fluency rather than rigid inquiry (Yin,

²¹ Appendix no. 7

2003) and attentiveness to the interviewee responses, while keeping the line of the research.

The aims of the interviews

The aim of the interviews was generally to get a description of the school from different points of view, with reference to school culture, or the constructs and procedures of organisational learning, and in particular:

- To get participants' perceptions of Meytzav, the procedure, and especially its report; to ask them to what extent these perceptions had changed over time;
- To know the extent to which they were familiar with the different parts of the report;
- To indicate their views of the process's benefits and drawbacks. By asking for this information I hoped to reveal whether the evaluation procedure was compatible with the school's vision and its needs, if there was a resistance towards the process, and whether the staff and the head teacher did not perceived it in the same manner (a factor that might lessen their capacity to improve). I hoped also to get indications of participants' educational beliefs and attitudes. Trying to ask these questions in relation to the time dimension might also give me some idea of changes that occurred over time;
- To get to know their readiness level to become involved in the process and consequent steps that had been taken to implement the evaluation's results: data dissemination, initiation of the action plan, definition, setting priorities, and monitoring. By checking these parameters I thought I might find out the extent to which they were using the reports' results, and the different procedures of using it at each level: the class, the school, and beyond school;
- To know about power relations in school and the characteristics of its leadership;

- To find out some features of the relationship of the head teacher and the teachers themselves and the school's relationship with the local authority and other external, beyond-school, forces;
- To get an idea about the extent to which the report is used as a source of information for future plans and actions.

The interview structure

I aimed to get different perspectives on each theme, so basically all interviewees were asked to give their account on the same themes. However, few of the questions posed to the head teacher and the SMT dealt with managerial perceptive in school and beyond-school. For example: What factors outside the school help you implement the report and why? What factors outside the school constrain you from implementing it and why? Do you involve anyone else – internal or external – in discussing how the report will be used? etc.

These interviews were meant to enlarge the data that I had already got from the first head teacher's interview, and to fortify or weaken the questionnaire data, as well as the data that had been gathered during the observations.

The questionnaire²²

The questionnaire was used as a measure for gathering non-biased, or certainly less biased, perceptions, as opposed to the interview, where interpersonal influence might be apparent (Yin, 2003) while the researcher's perceptions and beliefs might interfere with those of the interviewee. Although the definition of the questions could not be 'objective', it was hoped that bias would be reduced by triangulating the data that would emerge from both instruments.

The questionnaire was intended to gather perceptions of people about their school to identify aspects of capacity to improve, and about the report in order to identify the

²² Appendix no. 8

more usable parts of it, some of their educational perceptions which might again, imply on aspects of capacity, and information about what happens when the report 'meets' the school, which might tell something about processes of knowledge utilisation. Respondents were also asked about changes that had occurred through the years within these topics, so as to try and answer the question about the change over time that had occurred in their school with regard to processes of knowledge utilisation concerning the reports' findings. I hoped to enhance or refute other information that I had already got by using other measures. As the intention was to analyse the data quantitatively, the questionnaire was mainly comprised of close-ended questions; only a few were open-ended. However, on analysing its findings, I used both: statistical tests and general qualitative assessment. This process will be further explained in the framework for data analysis.

The questionnaire's structure:

It contained four parts. Most of the questionnaire, apart from the first part, was comprised of Likert scale statements. In the first part there were two questions where respondents had to choose one possible answer out of four. All the Likert scale statements were based on the literature review, referring to the researched phenomena and its components: the school, the report and to what happens when the report 'meets' the school. The respondents could choose one possibility of four: from 'strongly agree' to 'disagree'.

In its first part they were asked to refer to the way they accepted the first report at the school and the following ones. This was the part where I tried to identify their readiness, mainly referring to locus of control based on the work of Fullan (2001) and Datnaw (2000).

In the second part of the questionnaire they were asked to refer generally to their school and their personal and institutional ways of dealing with the report findings: what in the school was influenced by the report, dissemination procedures (Louis, 1994; Watkins, 1995), their attitude to the report as a source of information (Weiss, 1981; 1991; Cousins 1993; Huberman 1994; Davies 2000), and the extent to which they were part of the team who is involved with the report (Huberman, 1987; 1990).

In the third part they were asked to give an account of their school norms and its culture, its environment and the teachers' attitudes (MacGilchrist et al. 1997; Leithwood et al, 2000; Marks, Louis and Printy 2000; Reed and Stoll, 2000; Timperley and Robinson 2000; Hargreaves et al. 2001; Fullan, 2001, 2003 and others).

In the last part, based on the significant role played by the individual teacher in school processes as highlighted in the Chapter Two (Clark, 1988; Pajares, 1992; Hargreaves et al, 2001), respondents were asked about some of their own perceptions of staff development, learning procedures and norms in their school.

Four colleagues were asked to group the statements according to given themes: leadership, involvement, cohesiveness, openness, transferring, sharing and creating new knowledge, improvement and change, teachers' perceptions of INSET and their involvement in deciding about its topics, the report's characteristics, its influence over time, teachers' attitudes and perceptions of schooling and education, readiness – from acceptance to resistance. All statements that didn't get approval from at least three members were omitted.

Observations²³

In each school I used semi-structured observation twice: to generally observe the school and to observe a teachers' meeting. Being very familiar with the world of schooling, I assumed that my interpretations of the observations could be well founded and indeed they provided me with a wealth of data. Going into a social situation and looking is another way of gathering materials about the social world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). The major advantage of observation is its directness and being held in the 'real world' which is the subject of my inquiry. Being aware of the fact that there is no pure, objective, detached observation and that it is a situational process and the observer in any case is a participant to an extent (Argonsino and Perez in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003), I tried to limit my participation to the fact that I was

²³ See appendix no. 9

there, and I didn't take an active part in any meeting. But since, as Knight (2002) claims, the data that emerge from observations reflects only the researcher's inferences if it isn't accompanied by interviews and questionnaires, this was another reason to use all measures.

The two observations included the following:

First observation:

The time: first visit to school.

The aim: studying the school, culture and norms.

The scene: a routine day at school.

The observed items: the building, inside and outside, its maintenance, the way the different grades were grouped around the building, the playground and its unwritten rules, the presentations on the walls of the corridors.

The means: taking notes.

Second observation:

The time: second visit.

The aim: to collect first-hand data on the extent to which the report's findings were part of that school's planning, observing developmental processes, leadership styles, norms and power relations, and processes such as knowledge utilisation and knowledge generation.

The scene: a staff meeting. The topic of that staff meeting was planning the next year's school curriculum.

The means: a semi-structured observation. Its topics are mentioned above. Taking notes: what I saw and heard, what I thought during the staff meeting and immediately afterwards.

School documents

Several written documents served as sources of evidence in my study:

- The Meytzav reports, which served as externally provided information, were examined carefully as a basic part of this research with the purpose of studying its attributes and learn about different aspects of each school's capacity to improve. A preliminary step in creating my sample was to ask the head teachers' approval to make these reports available to me, so that my access to the needed data was assured. The material could indicate something about the time dimension because I could read three reports from different years for the same school and make a comparison between the different findings.
- School Action Plan and school publications were examined, bearing in mind that they are not 'objective' witnesses (Knight, 2002) but rather 'tell that school's story'. Through a reading of these documents, the school story as told by participants could offer a layer of past events and wider contexts.

As I was unfamiliar with the researched schools, school documents gave me an important wealth of initial data concerning that school; data, which later gave me the frame of reference for other measures that were used to gather more detailed information. It served as complementary material (Stake, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

The pilot process

One of the nine schools served as the pilot school. I selected the school as the pilot, excluding it from my later research, because I already had two rural area schools out of a total of nine. Having opted for four schools for my case studies, to have had two rural ones out of the four would have been disproportionate. It was therefore appropriate to pilot the instruments at a rural school. The head teacher, two SMT members and four class teachers were interviewed. Ten teachers filled in a questionnaire.

The outcomes of the pilot

These outcomes can be described in two parts, the first dealing with each research instrument that was piloted and the second offering the general conclusions arrived at each this stage.

Reading the documents: In response to my request for documents which could teach me about her school, the head teacher provided me with some leaflets, protocols, external reports and action plans; she also pointed me to the virtual school's site that had been developed. Those documents which were able to offer the best potential contribution to the research were chosen for analysis, notably the school's report and its Action Plan. The underlying rationale for choosing them being that, as they shared the same framework in all schools, their differing interpretations in each school could reflect better that school's culture (mainly, but not solely, the Action Plan) and its capacity to improve (mainly school's Meytzav report).

The interviews: The data of the interviews were analysed by grounded theory technique. From the emerging themes it was possible to conclude that the questions in the interviews were appropriate and that the aims that were mentioned above could be achieved by posing these questions to the interviewees.

The questionnaires: As a result of the pilot, some of the statements of the questionnaire had to be changed. Some of them were not clear enough, some of them were too general and confusing (as in asking about school culture), some of the reversed items were presented one after the other, and the connection between the two biased the answers, so they had to be separated. Where a double question at the same item made it unclear as well, I separated it. As a result of experiencing the questionnaire's analysis I decided to simplify it by changing the two non-Likert scale questions from the first part and interwoven into the existing tables. Consequently the structure of the questionnaire became more coherent.

While filling-in the questionnaire teachers felt as jumping from one theme to another. As a result, the sequence of the different parts of the questionnaire was changed so to have more inter-consistency.

The direction of the questioning moved from the initial questions, which dealt with participants' general perceptions of the two entities, school and the report, towards questions eliciting their views regarding quite specific processes in their own school – how they regarded the report and how this affected their acceptance of it, as well as their general beliefs on schooling.

The following structure was used in the new version of the questionnaire²⁴:

- ✓ 1st part: dealing with participants' perceptions of their school: procedures, culture, staff relationships, and professional development.
- ✓ 2nd part: dealing with the extent to which the different parts of the report are known to staff members.
- ✓ 3rd part: dealing with teachers' perceptions of the report and its dissemination and implementation procedures used in that school.
- ✓ 4th part: dealing with teachers' beliefs and attitudes.

As a result of teachers' inquiries while filling in the questionnaire, in the 1st and 3rd parts the scale for their choice was changed to four new degrees from 'very well fits' to 'doesn't fit' when they were asked to indicate the extent to which the statements fitted their own school's routines, instead of 'strongly agree' to 'disagree', so as to make it more accurate. In the 4th part the scale of 'strongly agree' to 'disagree' was retained.

General conclusions of the pilot

- It would be better to first conduct the interview and then ask participants to complete the questionnaire because otherwise the interview is influenced by the statements of the questionnaire. Although the interview will affect the answers of the questionnaire, being semi-structured, its influence would be limited. The semi-structured interview leaves it possible to hear more of the interviewee's 'voice'.

²⁴ Appendix no. 10

- The questionnaire was given out to teachers who came into the staff room coincidentally. It turned out that sporadically distributing the questionnaire was not a good idea: it proved impossible to organize a thorough return of them all. Consequently I decided that I would distribute the questionnaire in a staff meeting and ask all members to complete them while I waited to collect it.
- In each school there are usually three grades of the same year group. Each grade has a coordinator. If I wanted to get a general and more balanced picture of a school, I had to interview one of the class teachers of each grade and avoid interviewing the coordinator of that grade, because the coordinator's role makes her more involved in school's procedures. Therefore she can usually represent the SMT but not the class teachers.
- It might be worthwhile to conduct an observation that, apart from having participants' accounts of schooling procedures, school characteristics, and staff's educational perceptions, I could add my own perception of that school and themes related to my research. I decided to try and attend a staff meeting where they discussed the next year's school curriculum, and to gather data by observing school on a routine school day.

The framework of analysis

A case study is not a technique, it is rather a system of organizing information and social data in a way that preserves the unique character of the researched subjects (Tzabar, 1990). With the aim of preserving what is unique in each case, while bringing together all case studies to facilitate the study of the researched phenomena, interpretative methodology (Hammel, 1992) was used to analyse the findings.

The four schools which became 'case studies' would be studied with a multi-faceted approach in order to learn about the existing links between the external evaluation information and each school's capacity for knowledge utilisation, as well as about

processes and structures that existed in that school and were related to it. This might, in consequence, have implications for the school's capacity to improve.

As explained earlier (p. 58), the conceptual framework for the analysis of the findings can be provided by either a sociological, a psychological or a management perspective.

Analysis of the documentation

Schools' evaluation reports: The reading of the report(s) would be limited to the parts that reflected schools' capacity to improve. They would be thematically analysed in order to define and describe indicators of that school's capacity. Those that emerged from the analyses would be matched with those found in the current literature ("*field meets literature*" – a dialogue between field data and the literature). The intention was to compile a list of 'school capacity to improve' indicators with the aim of setting a base line of each school's capacity. This analysis would rely on 'objective' information that emerged from the external report rather than on subjective data received from the other research instruments. The same indicators in the subsequent two reports would be analysed and compared with previous ones so as to detect improvement /deterioration/stability of capacity for improvement indicators at each school.

The indicators mentioned above are detailed on Table no. 1.

Table no.1: Meytzav report and school's capacity indicators – a correlation.

Indicators which appear in the evaluation report	Parallel indicators that are mentioned in the literature concerning school's capacity to improve/internal capacity
Action plan – the number of teachers who knew about it, discussed it, and understood its rational.	One of the strategies for capacity building is knowledge utilisation (Cousins and Leithwood, 1993) in its best SDP (or 'action plan') will be a product of knowledge utilisation, using the report as a source of information, and might imply on capacity building. It is possible to assume that the more teachers are aware of these procedures and share it, the denser their internal communication. This is one characteristic of organisations that are more effective in using knowledge (Louis and Kruse 1998; Fullan 2001).
Teachers have different approaches to different students. (Differentiation: awareness of students' diversity). Teachers use a variety of teaching methods.	Building capacity is defined by Clarke (1999 p. 2) as 'teachers redefine their educational practice'. Creemers et al (2000) define it as constructing new knowledge and skills in practice. Redefining educational practice involves updating previous knowledge and old perceptions. I assume that teachers who redefine their educational practice are aware of students' diversity, using a variety of teaching methods and of assessment methods to tackle this diversity.
Teachers use traditional assessment	Teachers who use traditional assessment to a large extent probably do not redefine their educational practice. Thus their capacity to improve will be limited.
Teachers learn maths, Hebrew, science, English	'The power to engage in and sustain continuous learning of teachers and school itself for the purpose of enhancing student learning' (Stoll, 1999 p. 506)
The extent of teachers' expectations	Teachers' high expectations of students is one of the aspects that is mentioned in the literature as pointing to high internal capacity
There is a clear assessment policy	Explicit school-wide standards (Newmann, King and Rigdon, 1997)
There are clear rules for discipline	
Students agree that feedback is fair and effective	School environment which involves trust (for example: Cohen and Ball,1999; Creemers et al., 2000)
Students approve that they have good relationships with teachers	Openness between participants (for example: Cohen and Ball,1999; Creemers et al., 2000)
Teachers perceive the parents as partners in the educational process	Open and interactive connections with communities such as parents (Fullan, 2001; Macbeath et al. 2001; Stoll et al. 2003).
Teachers feel motivated. Teachers feel worn out.	A 'can do' attitude (Stoll, 2003), which is described as a part of a school internal capacity, might be materialised in a high percentage of teachers who indicate that teachers in that school are motivated opposed to a low percentage of teachers who perceive themselves as being worn out.
Teachers seeing themselves as highly professional. Teachers feel that they have good professional relationship	The extent to which teachers perceive their staff as being effective, and having good relationships has implications for the level of their capacity to improve (Barth 1990; Fullan 1992; Stoll 1996; Fullan 2001)
The head teacher is perceived as a pedagogical leader. Teachers felt that they are being consulted in the decision-making process. Teachers feel that they have autonomy.	These indicators are all related to the type of leadership. Sharing leadership among teachers, sharing responsibility, decentralizing decision-making, 'transformational' leadership, but at the same time having a professional person who leads, are all aspects of a school's internal capacity and its capacity to improve.

Schools' Action Plan: Comparative analysis would be used to read the Action Plans of each school from the last two years. The parameters that would be compared are:

The number of aims – whether it had been reduced over time, more focused, changes that occurred in these aims.

The content of the aims – its connections to the report's findings of that year.

The persons in the school who were responsible for implementation – this point might have implications for the level of staff involvement in that school, and the extent to which staff was working together towards the same aims.

The persons in the school who were responsible for monitoring the implementation of the plan and its consequent decision-making – this might have implications for the type of leadership at that school.

School's facilities that make the aims implementation feasible and students' population which would be influenced by the implementation of the aims – the extent to which these aims are school-wide aims.

The longitudinal nature of this study made it possible to compare Action Plans over several years. It was hoped that through this it would possible to detect changes that had taken place with implications for the school's learning, for the processes of decision-making and for the areas of action in that school.

Interviews would be read twice in their entirety in order to fully grasp their implications and to observe foci of meaning. Then they would be clustered into meaningful statements\central issues with a coding frame derived from the themes that emerge from the text itself, relating partly to the initial interview questions. Computerised software²⁵ would be used to cluster the citations of all interviews. Looking for more inclusive subjects in the second stage of analysis a categorisation might emerge which would be validated and extended by each new interview. Relying

²⁵ Narralyzer – <http://www.narralyzer.com/>

on this categorisation it might be possible to create a map in which the 'story' of each school/case and of all schools/cases emerges. Any new theme that emerged from the data would be added to the previous 'story'. Generally, it might become possible to categorise all 'stories' consistently with some nuances typical to each school/case. It is hoped that this will make it possible later to carry out a cross-analysis interpretation. Moreover, this categorisation might serve as the basis for general qualitative assessment of the questionnaire's data.

The questionnaire

Statistical analysis: means, standard deviations and comparison among schools can be computed on all variables, using analysis of variance (Anova) with computerised software – SPSS version 10. Variables might be divided into two main categories: the report and its impact on school, and teachers' perceptions and beliefs concerning schooling and education.

It was also possible to use this material as a qualitative data, aiming to triangulate the data that emerged from other sources. This could be done by analysing the statements that showed higher frequencies with connection to specific themes that were discussed in the interviews and to explore their verification or negation.

The observations

Two semi-structured observations would be conducted. The notes that would be taken during the observations would be analysed later with reference to the themes that would emerge and to the categories that would already be revealed by other instruments. Some of the themes for observation are explicit, others implicit. Themes like power relations, social procedures, environment, and the sources that influenced that school's curriculum. The notes would be categorised into the same categories as would emerge from the interviews.

The next four chapters present the findings that emerged from the data collection. It is presented in the following manner:

- A description of each of the case study sites.
- The analysed findings of each school.

A comparative analysis of all case study schools will follow. It forms the basis for the Discussion chapter.

The Findings

Each of the four chapters which follow is a synthesis of the data collected through all of the instruments described in the previous chapter. As was mentioned there, the data was collected in four visits to each school, by conducting interviews, observations, distributing questionnaires, and reading schools' documents, including the Meytzav report of each year. Each of the following chapters presents findings from one of the four case study schools.

The nature of the qualitative data collection means that the data collected in each school was not always exactly the same. Nevertheless, a common framework of analysis was used for all the four case study schools and in the following chapters a common set of headings will be used to facilitate the reader's understanding of the findings. These include:

- A description of each of the case study sites – its history and physical description, first impressions, the staff (the head teacher, SMT and teachers), and external support, where relevant.
- Analysed findings of each school divided into four sections. Each of the first three sections focuses on one report that the school received during the years of the research; the fourth section describes the changes over time. The four sections are also each divided into five sub-sections:
 - A summary of the report's findings
 - The dissemination of the report
 - The staff reactions
 - How was the new knowledge used?
 - The impact of the report

In the discussion chapter, this common pattern will facilitate comparison of the findings between the four schools.

The site of the research: School G

History and physical description

G is a small school in an urban area. The city, where it is located, was established in the 1950s when there was an influx of immigrants, mainly from Arab countries. It is one of Israel's southern cities, most of whose population used to be seen as being industrious without managing to achieve any level of affluence. With further waves of immigration from Russia in the 1990s many of the new immigrants settled in cities like this, which were significantly transformed. The newer population profile has tended to appear polarized as a large number set great store in education for their children even when they themselves are materially quite disadvantaged and culturally diverse.

Being a relatively old school (41 years old) it was being rebuilt and at the start of the study (my first two visits) was being housed on a temporary site. In its temporary location the school comprised of two buildings surrounded by a sanded school yard, one single-storey and the other with three stories. The head teacher's and secretary's rooms were located in the single-storey building with the classrooms in the other. Some classes were also located in cabins in the schoolyard. On September 2003 it moved to its new building. The new building was a modern double-storey building, incorporating all classrooms and the offices. The walls were aesthetically decorated, an outer expression of the mission statement embodied in the school's norms\rules and its curriculum.

The school was a small one (358 students), with 12 classes, one special education class and 24 teachers. Due to the school's changing location three classes of children who had hearing difficulties left, as did some other children. The rate of new immigrants at the school was very high; about 20% of the students were new immigrants (having been less than two years in the country) and the same rate was being absorbed annually. All students walk to school from the surrounding

neighbourhood and the catchment area was characterized by genuine poverty.²⁶ It was the aspiration of most families to move out of the neighbourhood and every year about 12% leave the school when their family moved to better neighbourhoods.

First impressions

On my first visit, March 2002, I was impressed by the kindness of all people at the school. Teachers, workers, and whoever I met were very kind and greeted me. Later my sense of acceptance was enhanced by the similar attitude of the secretary whom I used to call in order to set up meetings; she always recognized my voice over the phone and related to me accordingly. The friendly atmosphere, which seemed to be rooted in an orderly way of behaviour, was apparent in my visits to the school, which were very well organized. On my second visit, the head teacher knew that I was there and the deputy head was in charge of the teachers whom I was interviewing. Every teacher knew about the interview in advance and arrived precisely on time. I sat in a private room, organized especially for me. The location and the fact that each interviewee came prepared helped the interview to flow freely.

On the same day eleven teachers answered my questionnaire. The head teacher was not present but all teachers who attended answered the questionnaire quietly and in an orderly manner. In fact the atmosphere in the room appeared rather clinical, everybody focusing dutifully on the task in hand. In contrast an encouraging atmosphere was generally evident in the observed staff meeting and teachers spoke of the pleasant atmosphere in the school:

There is always someone to consult when needed, and there is no competition.

I love the school. I believe in what I am doing, so is everyone at the school. Although our physical conditions are not easy we do not complain.

²⁶ The school's fostering index is 9 out of 10, 10 being the lowest category. 'Fostering index' is the Israeli term to define the average socio-economic level of the families at the school. It influences the school's budget.

At the school we feel brotherhood, reciprocity and help...We have good personal relationships. We are like a family, there is a great motivation to work together and succeed. Some of the teachers have left; a fact that improved the pleasant atmosphere. It influences the students.

The way students were treated and responded was also part of this culture. Misbehaving students were told off and serious steps taken to explain to them what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' but generally the students looked very calm though they were dressed in clothes that were rather old-fashioned. An example of their orderly manner of behaviour could be observed in a bazaar they held during one break time. They wanted to raise some money for their activities, and the head teacher had suggested that they initiate a bazaar and promised that any sum they collected would be doubled by the school's budget. The bazaar was well organized and at the end of the break everything was in order and back in its place.

At the end of each year a party for all improving students was held to which parents were invited. It included students who were very low achievers and subsequently improved. The improvement was recorded in students' academic achievements or in their behaviour records. Parents' involvement was regarded as important. Parents were encouraged to take a real part in their child's education not only as visitors but also in their children's learning. In the first grades parents were invited to a workshop three times a year in order to teach them ways of helping their children in reading and maths. Staff believed that enhancing parents' involvement at school was very important and kept looking for ways of activating it. The head teacher believed in leading by example and described how she dedicated four hours each Friday to meet students who had difficulties together with their parents. At that meeting the student's work was monitored and recorded. As they improved, the meetings were reduced to once a fortnight.

Nevertheless, the impression given is that at this school there was no perceived difficulty in discriminating between what was 'right' and what was 'wrong'— in consequence of which there was no tolerance of divergent viewpoints. For example: at a staff meeting, in the attendance of the whole staff, two new English teachers were told by the head teacher that they (their classes) are not doing well enough and they

must improve. Other teachers were asked to give them ideas of how to do it. The open conversation about that matter made it clear on which teaching strategies should be used and the extent of responsibility that all teachers should have.

The staff

The head teacher

The head teacher had been at the school for 19 years. She had two BA degrees and considered learning as a significant part of a teacher's professionalism. She described herself as a person who was constantly changing but she also said she was clear as to her own methods and values, and she strove to get the staff to adopt them too. For example, when she told me about more teachers that reported, within the externally conducted interviews, on their feeling of burn-out she said: *I spoke to them and said that we have to turn their feeling into growth...I said to them: we all work very hard but if we don't implement change there is no point in our work. Change gives new stamina and helps to grow.*

She perceived her job to be one of demonstrating teaching skills, following-up teachers' work in the class, instructing teachers (for instance, helping a teacher prepare for a staff meeting that she, the teacher, will be conducting), and checking each work sheet before it was distributed to students. She told me with some pride that the teachers know that if she thinks that one of them isn't doing her work as requested, she will be asked to leave (in the Israeli educational system it is usually the mandate of the school's inspector, not the head teacher, to decide upon teachers' leaving or joining a school). In all interviews she gave her accounts in first person: 'I did', 'I thought' etc. even when she was referring to the staff or all teachers. She described her approach to teachers as 'using the stick and carrot'. The emotional well being of staff was the concern of the head teacher as long as they acted in accordance with her beliefs, ideas and perceptions. An example might be that during the staff meeting there was a very high level of attentiveness, and the head teacher 'told off' teachers who spoke without permission. When the staff meeting ended, she summed up the ideas that had emerged, and spoke about their implications for practice. She then made clear that these would be followed up whilst at the same time offering her help.

Other examples were given by the head teacher herself: on one hand she didn't restrain herself from saying to a teacher that in another class they had better results in the external exam. But at the same time she claimed that she 'built up' the self-esteem of teachers by complimenting them. She believed that by this method they would work harder to succeed.

In my interviews with individual teachers, they spoke of the head teacher as being very ambitious and under pressure from the external system. For example: although the external report's results were quite good, she did not let the staff rest on their laurels, stressing that they could always improve. However, they felt that she gave them autonomy in their classrooms, was attentive to their needs and treated them favourably: "*We follow her*", they said.

The head teacher understood the need for teachers to feel autonomous but felt that at the same time she needed to keep a very tight control. For example: planning the next year's curriculum she said that she knew what her main aims were but she would make sure that it appeared to come from the teachers. She understood they had to have a sense of ownership so that the curriculum would be successfully implemented. She supported the Ministry of Education's approach (of objective accountability) and was happy that 5th grade teachers were forbidden (by the Ministry of Education's Evaluation department) to attend the class when the external test took place, saying: "*It's good; it demands further responsibility in their (the teachers') work*".

She demanded high standards of her staff and monitored them closely: "*I come to the class to teach an individual child, but at the same time the teacher knows that she is being observed*". Follow-up was also highly emphasised: "*I keep a close follow-up on children's booklets, (and) on sessions in the class. Teachers cannot tell me stories, I know what is happening*". But she saw this close monitoring as a way of supporting staff: "*At the beginning, the teacher didn't like that, but she realised that it boosted her work*".

She herself was supported by the school's inspector, and she perceived the inspector as very professional.

Although the head teacher's room in the temporary buildings was isolated, an 'open door' policy was apparent. During our meeting people were entering the room freely, including parents, students, and teachers. I realized that the head teacher knew everyone by name and related individually to each one: children and parents alike. However, she did have boundaries: a child, who walked into her room complaining about a quarrel in his class, was sent back to let the teacher deal with the problem. Her approachable policy was also apparent in our meetings: she provided me with any document that I asked for as well as documents that she was thinking might help me with my work. At the end of our first interview she asked for a copy of the transcript.

The SMT and the teachers

About a quarter of the teachers were experienced ones i.e. had been at the school for more than 10 years; half of them had between 3 and 5 years of service at the school, while the rest of them were new; less than 2 years. All were women. In terms of staff stability the school appeared to have quite a high turnover of staff. Occasionally staff left for personal reasons but frequently the head teacher had asked teachers to leave due to her dissatisfaction with their work:

It's not enough to be nice; a teacher who doesn't do her work as needed must be gone.

They understood that it was for the system's good. They couldn't stay because they acted as if they were in a 'summer camp'.

A Senior Management Team (SMT) was established in 1984, when the head teacher started her work at the school. One of her criteria for SMT membership was the similarity between members' educational philosophy and hers. The place of each member on the SMT was temporary and they were frequently replaced.

Four members of the SMT had special responsibilities relating to the implementation of the school's aims: one was in charge of improving literacy, another promoting a safe climate, a third, enhancing inquiry skills, and a fourth (the head teacher) changing teaching practices from whole-class work to work in small groups based on a dialogue with students.

However, there was a common ethos that all students can succeed. The head teacher kept saying that her aim was to break the paradigm of the connection between socio-economic level and academic achievements and a new teacher added: *We have to learn to better trust students' abilities because it influences our work.* When some of the questionnaires suggested a contradictory finding, i.e. that not all teachers agreed, this was explained by the head teacher as:

There is a serious teachers' turnover and it might be the reason for the difference between the data that emerged from the interviews and that of the questionnaires. It is difficult to convey the message to the new teachers.

A culture, which promotes excellence as well as great motivation to succeed, was apparent as well as one which enhanced continuity and systemic work. A teacher of young children (age 7) indicated that: *Every teacher must know the whole school curriculum so that she can know where the students come from and where they go.*

The teachers declared that all of them share the responsibility for the children's success or failure. The fact that they were given a good external evaluation report put a further responsibility on their shoulders not to let the school down. Whilst the teachers felt they work very hard, they always felt backed up and could see the results. They felt part of the school, and most were proud of their school. The move of the school to the temporary location had been a traumatic event but one which (paradoxically) enhanced their feelings of togetherness and caring towards the school and the students: *I must not let down the children who have stayed* said one of the teachers. Not without pride she added: *There are children who left and now they want to return.* Sharing and mutual responsibility was mentioned on several occasions by both the head teacher and by the staff; these attributes and transparency were regarded here as promoting accountability.

Team work appeared to be significant. The teachers shared practices among themselves, each of them contributing her area of expertise to schooling. It was acknowledged that neither the head teacher nor the teachers can work and succeed alone; teachers, parents and students all being regarded as partners. This sense of partnership was achieved through having a systemic vision, which was known to

every one, and all expectations were explicit. All teachers were also taking part in external courses. There was a high motivation for learning and most drew the connection between their own learning and the success in the external exams and the head teacher's satisfaction with their work.

However, whilst the teachers said that the head teacher decided which courses they would attend – she got the information on the recommended external courses and matched it to the appropriate teacher – the head teacher said that they decided together.

External support

There are further sets of people who are involved with Israeli schools; these are the external instructors and the school's inspector. At school G the subject instructors visited the school on a weekly or every fortnight basis and worked with teachers. Their subjects of expertise were maths, language and writing. They instructed the teachers on how to monitor and build up individual programs for students. Some of the sessions were held in small groups, others that were the concern of all teachers were given in a whole staff meeting. In other cases an instructor was hired to promote a special subject matter by helping the teachers. For example, when they realized that students' writing was inadequate they joined an external project which provided an instructor to help develop that skill.

The school's inspector was involved with school's work; they felt that she valued their work. She gave advice when needed and the head teacher felt free to seek it. One of the teachers said that the inspector was "*sitting on our tail*", visiting school every six weeks to check their improvement.

The reports

1st report 2001

A summary of the report's findings

At this stage although only 28% of the students agreed that their teachers were taking into consideration the differences between them, 40% of them thought that their teachers used a variety of teaching methods (which is a way to relate to the differences between students). More than 60% of the students thought that they were getting a fair and effective feedback and that the relationships with their teachers were good. But a smaller number of them (38%) reported on a clear direction within a clear framework for discipline. Only 70% of the teachers who were interviewed had high expectations of their students. Other parameters that described the teachers' perceptions of their professional development and the school as a working place were not very high, except their feeling of autonomy (all of them felt as having autonomy), their motivation (90% of them felt motivated) and their perception of themselves as having good professional relationships (92%). Students' achievements in the various subjects varied.

The dissemination of the report

Before presenting it to teachers and parents the first thing the head teacher did was to send a copy to the school's inspector. Later the results were presented to the teachers. The SMT and the head teacher met to analyse the results and any teacher whose students were examined was invited to discuss her class's results with the head teacher. The head teacher felt that there was much more they would do with the results, but at that stage it was kept at an informational level.

The staff's reactions

When the head teacher received the first report she described herself as being euphoric. Being a school in a deprived neighbourhood, with students who came from a low socio-economic level she had not expected it to be so positive. The first reaction of the staff, however, was one of fear and confusion: "*some of the teachers saw it as the end of the world*" said the head teacher. It was the first time they had

received student feedback about the school. They questioned the way they were supposed to read the findings, and worried about its implications for their work. One teacher said:

... it was frightening, we did not know what to do with it, how to look at it and how to read it...

How was the new knowledge used?

As a result of the restricted dissemination most of the comments regarding the use of the findings and the impact of the first report came from the head teacher. The implementation procedures that took place as a result of receiving the first report were fraught with difficulties. Difficulties originated, in the head teacher's view, from the large number of new teachers at school and from having to change experienced teachers' perceptions and practice as well as make the part-time teachers an integral part of these processes.

Teachers were speaking about external help that was assigned with the aim of improvement. External instructors of language, teaching strategies, and maths helped the teachers in their efforts to improve. This was enhanced by the systematic writing of the action plan. Developing the action plan was regarded, by the new policy of the Ministry of Education which put into action the external evaluation procedure, as part of the implementation of the report's findings. At this stage the head teacher only consulted her SMT and provided a complete 'product' to her teachers. She emphasised:

The action plan focused the school's work and made it more professional. It gave an added value to head teacher-teacher discussions.

The impact of the report

Apparently the impact of the first report was sporadic. It mainly included its use by the head teacher to motivate teachers' work, to make the schools rules more explicit, to add hours to subjects which had low rate of student achievements and to influence the use of terms throughout the school, adjusting it to the terms used in the external evaluation procedure. Teachers of the young age said: *I saw the terms they used in the*

external exam and I have changed the terms I use accordingly. A SMT member indicated on extra hours provided to maths classes aiming at improved students' achievements, she said: we are trying to adjust ourselves to the report. These extra hours enables us to conduct more individual approach to students.

The first report gave an opportunity to the head teacher to take forward her own ideas: she felt that she can rely on the report of students' achievements and use it to 'tell off' a teacher whose class was not doing well enough, and she and the teachers created a booklet where the rights and obligations of students were published *for the knowledge of all that were involved: teachers, students and their parents.*

2nd report 2002

A summary of the report's findings

In the second report the school's regulations had become clearer. There was a significant improvement in students' positive perception of the clear direction within a clear framework of discipline, and the teachers' perception of the clear policy of assessment. Many more teachers responded positively to the parameters of their professional development and their perception of the school as a working place. But still a third of the respondent teachers felt worn out. Student achievements in English were low. Other achievements were satisfactory.

The dissemination of the report

With the aim of making better use of the results of the report, the school's dissemination procedure this time around was much more thorough. The head teacher presented the report to her SMT; they raised questions and these were presented to the rest of the staff. A group of the teachers had joined with others from the neighbouring schools with the aim of understanding the external evaluation procedure including its report. This helped them feel more in control and less threatened. This was followed up at the school itself with three sessions in which the report was studied. At the same time, the head teacher discussed the results from individual classes with the relevant teachers.

After spending two sessions on analyzing the report, at the third session the head teacher led a discussion of the reasons for their success, and who they could approach

to support plans for improvement. The amount of involvement in these sessions varied from teacher to teacher but each was required to take action as a result of it.

The staff's reactions

This report triggered more concern and there was evidence that the school was beginning to query the process itself. The head teacher felt that the process of the external evaluation had harmed her autonomy and the teachers had concerns:

- that every school got the same exam without regard for its students' origins or their difficulties;
- about the way the Department of Evaluation gathered the data; and.
- that the procedure did not relate to personal achievement and did not reflect the achievement of an individual student.

One SMT member said that it had a positive influence on processes at the school although it had increased the stress on teachers. There was enhanced motivation to study before the exam, but this created an anxiety to achieve. A class's success was seen as a teacher's success, which itself enhanced the motivation to learn.

How was the new knowledge used?

The implementation procedures were also taken forward. More specifically it appeared that this could be seen in four areas: the school's curriculum, the teachers' work and students' achievements, procedures of self evaluation, and writing the action plan.

The school's curriculum

The school's curriculum had been written to focus on the exam, and student monitoring with relation to their inquiry skills, independent learning, further writing skills and thinking skills, had been improved as a result of a careful reading of the exam's requirements and the report. For example:

- Extra hours for certain subjects were provided. A teacher in a class preparing for the external exam that year said that she now emphasized the subjects in which her students were going to be tested. The class received an extra hour's tuition in maths and language.
- Language studies changed from being the sole concern of the class tutor to becoming the concern of every teacher in the school. Teachers of young grades took the same responsibility as teachers of the older students who underwent the exams. As one of the young class teachers said: *"It's the responsibility of us all; we need to know, so that we can prepare the young children accordingly"*.

Teachers' work and students' achievements

- Extra individual or small group work was conducted. As part of the head teacher's belief in an individual approach as a way of promoting student achievements each teacher had to choose students in her class to work with individually, monitoring the outcomes and regularly reporting to the head teacher. Every two months the teacher would change the students with whom she worked.
- More external instructors had been appointed to work with the teachers at school. Two of the interviewed teachers thought that they received more maths instruction to improve the next report's results. As a result they had changed their way of teaching.
- Team work was promoted: *'...because the results of the report are presented for the whole school year, not only by classes, consequently you (all teachers of the same grade) work together for improvement'* said one of the teachers.
- Professional learning became one means to facilitate the new kind of work. There were internal procedures of professional learning as well as external ones. For example, several external instructors visited the school regularly. Their subjects of expertise were the subjects of the external evaluation procedure; maths, language and writing. Most weeks the teachers of the same grade met to prepare their lessons with or without the external instructor. In recent years they had more

opportunities to share their new knowledge in staff meetings so that it would later be possible to apply it.

- The report identified a high percentage of teachers who were experiencing burn-out from the tension induced by the pressure to succeed; teachers had felt that their personal success was perceived as a direct function of the success of their class, and in fact this led the head teacher to ease the pressure somewhat.

Enhanced procedures of self-evaluation

Monitoring and evaluating was previously considered as important at the school. But one impact of the report was to place a greater emphasis on monitoring student achievement and the teachers' way of working. The head teacher implemented a system whereby:

- Students' reading skills were monitored using fixed rubrics twice a year.
- A 'head teacher exam' was conducted in maths and language three times a year. It was developed by the head teacher and the external instructor in that subject field. Teachers did not see it in advance but they knew the themes and they received the rubrics. The head teacher insisted that the students should know the rubrics as well.
- The head teacher continually followed up these more specific monitoring activities by observation of class work, students' notebooks, discussions with students etc.
- The teachers' work was monitored and:
 - The action plan was checked annually by the staff and updated accordingly.
 - The teachers received feedback from parents and the head teacher.
 - The students had a monitoring notebook, which recorded their progress. By reading these notebooks the head teacher checked whether teacher's plans were being implemented at a class level.

The action plan

The timing of the action plan was changed. The writing process started very early. In March teachers were already being asked to record the extent of their satisfaction with the action plan's implementation, its strengths and areas for improvement. They were also requested to note actions which might help to achieve the different aims of the action plan. The new action plan was ready by the end of June so that planning for the next academic year could take place in good time.

It was no longer the concern of the head teacher alone. She explained that it should specify the exact steps that had to be taken to improve, such as extra hours, a more individual approach, new forms of instruction etc. The improvement would be checked in the next report. So the action plan became a direct consequence of the report, and was aimed at facilitating implementation of the report findings. The place of the action plan became more significant. It became a 'manual' for work, a shared, explicit document to follow. The head teacher now regarded the definition of the action plan to be the concern of all staff members. Each member of the SMT would analyse the previous year's action plan in relation to a specific area with a group of teachers and they would produce a draft plan. The draft would be discussed by the head teacher and groups of teachers with the aim of refining school priorities for the next action plan. At that stage the school's inspector would also be invited to be involved.

However, the teachers' accounts were slightly different. They saw the development of the action plan as being the responsibility of the SMT and they left it up to them: *it is the role of the SMT to check what has to be changed. In the past we succeeded, we have proofs of that, so we trust them.*

As well as the action plan which facilitated the implementation of the report's findings, the external instructors also acted as facilitators. They helped the teachers to implement the plan. They demonstrated lessons, and divided the action plan into smaller units so to make it easier to be implemented. One of the teachers described these processes:

An instructor of maths comes regularly, she helps me a lot. There are some more instructors in other subjects. They do everything to improve our work and make it more effective. They teach us how to follow-up students work and to draw individual plans for them.

Later every teacher's work was monitored by the head teacher in accordance with the plan.

The impact of the report

The report's impact on the school seemed to be regarded as highly significant by all partners. Teachers wrote that although the report had not changed their educational philosophy or the organizational structure of school, they (the teachers) were now "*more professional and more efficient*". They perceived the report as promoting professionalism through the actions taken as a result of the report findings: focusing their work, facilitating reflection, teachers working more efficiently, teachers studying as a result of the findings, and knowing better what they needed to improve. Teachers said:

I became more efficient: the way I organize the learning, my way of planning, monitoring individual students, and develop inquiry skills. I am trying to change my role as a teacher, to let them be more independent.

....as a result we feel more responsible... with the aim to improve the results. We got more instruction, for example, in maths.

The comparison with others drives you to work harder and you become more professional.

You have to inquire and seek ways for improvement; even the laziest teacher can't get away.

The head teacher also claimed that the external evaluation scheme pushed the school ahead, upgraded the work at the school and boosted the system with a new atmosphere. As mentioned above (p. 90) the head teacher felt that the prohibition

placed on teachers being present during their students' examinations was actually a means of promoting their sense of responsibility for their students, and acted as a test of their accountability, which improved in consequence.

The school's culture was impacted in several ways. First, teachers argued that the level of transparency and openness was enhanced, which generated more unity among the staff. Teachers were thus able to deal with specific areas that the report identified as 'of concern'. This was demonstrated, for instance, in relation to homework, an area identified by the report as one where communication among teachers should be improved.

There was an enhanced sense of teachers for being part of the 'whole' and enhanced continuity between grades – themes checked by the external exams were viewed with a new perspective at the school, mainly becoming everybody's concern. Previously every teacher focused on her class. Although not all students were taking the tests in the same year (only the students of year 5 were being tested and the students of the last three years 4–6 were filling in the questionnaires), the school was seen more as a whole (by teachers) and each one of them perceived herself as being connected to it.

Ultimately, the head teacher believed that all this has led to the development of a shared language among teachers, fostering a fresh dialogue in the school. Statements made by the head teacher and the teachers reinforced each party's educational perceptions:

It is the responsibility of all of us, said a teacher of the young age, no matter when these students will be tested....

Everything that happens at the school is of my concern said another teacher, the school's atmosphere, students' achievements, and the way they perceive the school.

While the head teacher indicated: *all teachers must feel responsible for students' achievements and for whatever happens in the school, it is not the concern of a specific class or a specific teacher.*

Several times during the summing up when the head teacher started a sentence her teachers finished it for her. It sounded like a prayer.

3rd report – 2003

A summary of the report's findings

The third external report reflected improvements in the following indicators: more students thought that their teachers used a variety of teaching methods, and reported that they had good relationships with teachers. Paradoxically fewer teachers had high expectations of their students. Fewer teachers saw the head teacher as a pedagogical authority, or the parents as partners in the educational process, and felt that they were being consulted in the decision-making process. Student achievements especially in maths, but in language too, had improved.

The dissemination of the report

The procedures for analyzing the report did not change between the second and third reports and part of this analysis process was witnessed while observing a staff meeting. The meeting was held in November 2003, after the arrival of the third report. At that meeting each group of teachers selected one part of the report for their analysis. The head teacher asked that the teachers translate the percentages of the report (the data of the report is presented in percentages) into numbers i.e. if 3% of the children commented, what did it mean in numbers? How many students? At that meeting they were trying to make the connections between the external report, their action plan and their routine monitoring, and give suggestions as to how to improve. They were also trying to find the connections between high student achievement, resources that were invested in that subject matter learning\teaching, the learning environment as reported by students, and the continuity between classes as stated by teachers.

The staff's reactions

During my last visit I met not only with the head teacher but also a group of the teachers. All eight teachers that were invited by the head teacher to take part at that meeting had a special responsibility in the school (such as: head of science, head of IT, head of maths etc.).

The explicit aim of that meeting was to triangulate my findings. A summary of my findings were sent to the school in anticipation of that meeting. But the interview took its own path. It was at this meeting that they offered a justification for staff responses to the external evaluation. The teachers and the head teacher differed in their responses.

According to the report, fewer teachers than before felt that they were being consulted in decision making. The attendees opposed this finding saying that in reality they felt much more involved in decision making process. They tried to explain the gap between these two ways of seeing the topic by their 'increased sophistication'. *"In the past"* they said *"fewer issues were brought up to us, having heard more issues, and consequently knowing about more issues that are dealt within school, we feel as if we were taking a smaller part in decision making"*. They also suggested that it may just have been differences of understanding the concept of 'taking part in decision making': *"while having the opportunity to initiate processes in the school and carry them out, it is possible that although this fact is a proof of having taken part in decision making, teachers do not see that as part of the decision making process"*. The teacher who spoke said that in the past the head teacher had been much more involved in their work, whereas recently they had been able to solve problems independently. The head teacher tried to explain the same finding by indicating that four of the respondents were new at the school.

Teachers explained their lower expectations, as reflected in the external report, by the fact that they had become more professional and as a result had concerns about students' achievements. Whereas the head teacher tried again to explain it by the fact that many new teachers joined the staff that year (9 out of 24).

Trying to explain the changed place of the report at the school, a SMT member said:

At the beginning we saw it as an external procedure. As time went by we felt the need to analyse and to learn the lesson. There is a change in our perception of the report and the role it plays in school's life.

How was the new knowledge used?

Slight changes were made with regard to the implementation procedure at this stage.

The head teacher said:

Last year the coordinators worked with their staff members and I didn't ask them for examples of their implementation, but this year we have worked together and I visit the classes more frequently so as to see implementation in action. Now they feel it's their responsibility.

After having received the third report, the administration of the action plan was further changed. In the middle of the year, at a teachers' meeting, each teacher was given the three priorities of the previous action plan with details of actions required. Each teacher had to present how she had implemented these actions by giving examples and reporting on difficulties. The head teacher compiled a summary report and gave it to the school's inspector. Previously the teachers did not have to give examples but the head teacher saw this as a better means of implementation because she thought that, by giving examples, teachers: *"cannot tell stories, they have to report on real events that had happened in their classes"*.

The impact of the report

The impact of the third report appeared to be the result of the dissemination and implementation procedures. In their discussions teachers concluded that the high students' achievements of maths were the result of an extended number of hours which were dedicated to this subject and the work in small groups. For this reason they recommended maintaining these routines.

Making a comparison between the external report findings, their action plan and their own monitoring, they have decided to put an extra emphasis on the head teacher's observations so that it will help them to further improve.

It was mainly the refined dissemination procedure including the reading of the report by analyzing it, which enhanced teachers feeling responsible of the reports findings, and made them feel more professional.

Changes over time

The following table presents a summary of key elements of the three reports (2001–2003), showing the changes in teachers' and students' accounts. However, because it does not reflect the accounts of the same population it is not indicative for itself it rather implies on the change over time.

Table no. 2: The three reports – changes over time

The topics of the report	Percentages of positive answers – 1 st report	Percentages of positive answers – 2 nd report	Percentages of positive answers – 3 rd report
The characteristics of the school's pedagogical culture			
Students believe that their teachers are taking into consideration the differences between students	28 %	39%	32%
Students think that their teachers use a variety of teaching methods	40%	40%	65%
Students agree that feedback is fair and effective	65%	67%	71%
Teachers agreed that they use traditional assessment techniques	23%	39%	7%
Teachers agree that there is a clear policy for assessment of students	60%	94%	_____
The school culture			
Students approve that they have good relationships with teachers	69%	68%	87%
Students agreed that, regarding discipline, there is clear direction within a clear framework	38%	82%	90%
Students' achievements and teachers' expectations			
Teachers have high expectations of the students	70%	70%	55%
Professional development and the school as a working place			
Teachers are attending maths courses	40%	70%	19%
Teachers are attending Hebrew courses	45%	25%	100%
Teachers are attending Science courses	0%	0%	100%
Teachers are attending English courses	0%	0%	100%
Teachers perceive the head teacher as a pedagogical authority.	88%	100%	87%
Teachers felt that they are being consulted in the decision-making process	70%	100%	72%
Teachers perceive the parents as partners in the educational process	80%	93%	72%
Teachers seeing themselves as highly professional	78%	93%	87%
Teachers feel that they have autonomy	100%	92%	No data
Teachers feel motivated	90%	90%	100%
Teachers feel that they have good professional relationship	92%	92%	100%
Teachers feel burdened and worn out	40%	30%	33%

Generally, the second report showed an increase in positive responses in a significant number of areas: clarity of the assessment and the discipline policies, a higher professional level amongst teachers, aspects relating to students' diversity, perceiving the head teacher as a pedagogical authority and being included in decision making.

In the third report the picture became more balanced: in relation to the characteristics of the school's learning culture many more students thought that their teachers used a variety of teaching methods; and those that thought teachers' feedback was more effective remained stable. Fewer teachers reported that they were using traditional assessment techniques. The relationships between students and teachers seemed to have improved while, paradoxically, teachers' expectations of the students declined. At this stage more teachers were extending their studies which might be the reason that they appeared more motivated. However their perception of the head teacher as a pedagogical authority declined, as well as their feeling that they were being consulted in the process of decision-making.

The dissemination procedures

In all cases the report came directly to the head teacher, so it was her decision as to who should receive it. The dissemination procedure widened its circles from the time of the first report to those following. The first report had been sent to the school's inspector and discussed with the SMT, and relevant parts of the report were discussed with those teachers whose classes had been examined. The rest of the staff knew about the report, but they did not know its details.

With the second report the 'circle' had expanded. The dissemination procedure had become much more thorough-going. The head teacher met her SMT to read the report and define questions with regard to the findings. These questions were presented to the teachers, but not before they had had two staff meetings to give them the opportunity to read the report thoroughly. At these meetings they tried to find cause-and-effect relationships between what they have done and what the results were. A third meeting included the plan for future steps. It appears that most teachers were involved in the dissemination procedure; no matter what the level of their involvement, they were obliged to take action.

The staff's reactions

While the teachers' reaction to the first report was one of fear and confusion, over the time their reaction changed. Their response to the second report, with its accompanying instructions on how to read it, became more sophisticated. With greater experience of the process, they could query it and express their reservations. At this stage, although the head teacher was still quite satisfied with the report's findings, she also mentioned one of its drawbacks: the fact that it harmed the autonomy of the head teacher. Getting the third report followed by my fourth visit to the school triggered a further look at the report's findings. At this meeting the staff tried to justify the changes reflected in the report's findings, mainly the points that appeared to be weaker at that time. At the meeting they put an emphasis on what they felt was the actual situation as opposed to the findings of the third report, trying to explain the contradictions. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that possibly their thinking had developed due to the fact that they were now part of my research for the third year running.

The use of the findings

Being the concern of a small 'circle', the first report's findings were transformed by the head teacher into an action plan which was the result of her consultations with the SMT. The teachers' role at that stage was to receive a prepared product and to apply its ideas.

Appearing to realize that the external evaluation might serve as a tool for the school's improvement and that the report was still not realizing its full potential, the head teacher understood that the implementation process needed to be enhanced. At that stage the process of defining the action plan became the concern of wider circles of staff, although it was still the head teacher who initiated the work plan with her SMT and used the new findings as a tool to promote her own ideas. It was to bring this into effect that the SMT took it forward to work on the different parts of the action plan with staff members. Furthermore the implementation procedure was made more efficient by involving external instructors in implementing the report. Teachers were urged to give examples when they reflected on actions that they took as a result of the action plan. Evidently the hierarchy was in no way undermined. The head teacher was the one who initiated the process and closely monitored and controlled it.

The impact of the reports

Although teachers did not change their educational philosophy and the school organizational structure, too, did not change, other areas within the school had been influenced. These appeared to be: the school's curriculum, the procedures of professional learning, the school's culture, and the school's routines of monitoring and self-evaluation.

The site of the research: School M

History and physical description

School M is 73 years old, and is located in one of a group of 17 new towns ('settlements'). In Israel the 'settlements' have a distinctive character arising out of the way they were established when thousands of immigrants arrived in the 1930s and the 1950s. Most were agriculture settlements although some provided an added quality of life, being situated well outside a large town but still close enough for their inhabitants to make a living in that town.

M was a big school. There were 900 students, in 28 classes. 50 teachers taught at the school as well as 30 instructors of after-school activities. Being a rural school it was very spread out. Ten single-storey buildings were scattered over a wide sanded playground was covered with vegetation. Each building contained classes of one grade level: 2 classes in the first and second grade, 4 classes in the fourth and fifth grade, and 5 classes in the third and sixth grade. All the buildings were old but well maintained. The offices, the head teacher's room and the staff room were all in a self-contained building. There was one modern two-storey building in which the computer laboratories and a hall were located.

'Educational' signs may be observed, the first saying:

At school M we are able to manage our life – in the school yard, in class and in our studies. If difficulties arise we use the 'thinking traffic light' and make our way to the train.

Further down there was 'the train', made of wood, with each wagon representing a stage in a problem-solving process. Wooden traffic lights were scattered in the yard to remind the children about this principle of managing problems. In the open-air corridors most of the decoration had faded colours, as did all 'traffic lights'. Some of the classes were freshly decorated but others need their decoration renewing.

The head teacher's room is wide and its lay-out is welcoming. Apart from the formal table, there was a sitting corner for a small group of people, with comfortable

armchairs. The staff room was quite spacious. There were two computers for teachers' use.

The school's catchment area included all of the 17 nearby settlements. Some of them are very well off, others poor. Nevertheless the school's fostering index was 3 out of 10, which is quite high. Recently, people have been quitting urban areas looking for a better standard of living in a rural area. Consequently each year about 50 new students joined the school. The head teacher claimed that:

They have different codes of behaviour and they are used to different learning strategies. They have to get adjusted to the new place.

There was a varied population of parents. Most of them were well-educated, involved, supportive and cooperative, according to the head teacher's accounts.

First impressions

In all my visits to the school a relaxed atmosphere was apparent in the playground. Students were playing or walking around, with no stress or loud noises.

However, frequently a disorganized and hectic atmosphere took over, mainly in the staff room and the offices. Almost all my visits to the school were affected by this. For example: although pre-arranged, the head teacher's second interview with me was divided into two sessions because she had to teach in-between. The head teacher's manner of handling my visit was reflected in the teachers' reaction towards my presence. While I tried to pre-arrange my visits and asked for an orderly schedule in advance, the only person who knew about my visit was the deputy head teacher. Moreover I didn't get a private room where I could carry out my interviews and since the teachers didn't know about my visit each one had to be called separately and was surprised by my presence. The interviews were conducted in a corner of the staff room, a fact that limited the ability to concentrate and to maintain efficiency. The questionnaires instrumental to the research were completed in a tumultuous atmosphere. The head teacher who was waiting for the teachers to finish didn't really encourage them to do it: she was lukewarm. While filling in the questionnaire they were not very responsive and gave me the feeling it was a burden and I was requested

to leave the room as soon as my questionnaires were handed back to me. In spite of my attendance only 17 questionnaires out of 30 were handed back to me. Later I realized that 6 were fully answered and 8 were half answered: 3 had filled in only the first page. Clearly this affected the findings.

Initially it was the head teacher who had agreed to take part in the research; teachers had not been asked to. Most of them reacted towards me with suspicion and resentment. However, there was some evidence that other elements external to the regular daily working of that school were treated in a similar way. I encountered one instructor, who worked with the teachers on a regular basis, leaving the school in the middle of the day. Very angrily she claimed that teachers were not prepared enough for her visit, so she had to go.

My third visit to the school reinforced my previous observations. Although it had been arranged in advance, my presence again turned out to be a surprise to the head teacher. She clapped her head when she realised that she had forgotten to inform me that the staff meeting which I had planned to observe was cancelled.

A few days before my visit they had been informed of a visit of the district inspector and some other “*important Ministry of Education people*” (head teacher’s definition) which was due to take place within the coming four days. The school was like an ants’ net. Teachers were very busy preparing material and activities for their classes and the head teacher invited me to attend a short meeting that she had arranged with all the teachers with the aim of preparing them for the ‘big visit’. There were some other issues which she handled quickly and in a shallow manner. At this visit I tried to interview two teachers of contrasting grades (second grade and sixth grade). They were uncooperative and very tense. Not much information could be gathered from these interviews.

The Staff

The head teacher

The head teacher had been at the school for five years, having previously been head teacher of another school for seven years. She declared that she believed in education,

and that therefore the teacher in a class had to be a model for the students. On the other hand she said:

Our expectations are always higher; however in each class there are students who disturb the learning of others. If we could isolate these disruptive elements, each class could reach great heights.

The school's main aims were very broadly defined by the head teacher, these were:

- To promote students' achievements and
- To create an appealing environment for them.

At two different interviews she gave two different accounts of the main topic for the school's curriculum.

She felt that she influenced the teachers. It seems that she did it in various ways. To an extent, she perceived herself as the inspiration of the school; it was she who provided the ideas: *'I bring up an idea at the SMT meeting and then we spread it among all teachers'*. Backed up by her SMT she also set up the regulations: when the external evaluation report revealed deterioration in indicators of violence at school:

I made a change in the way in which we create order in the school. We defined it in the SMT meeting, and now, I believe, the regulations are clearer.

Another way the head teacher influenced the teachers emerged in a staff meeting when she insisted on the need always to do better, to improve, delivering this mantra to the teachers in quite a doctrinaire way:

They will ask us what we expect from students (she referred to the anticipated visit). It is obvious that we expect them (the students) to be the best. A teacher, who doesn't expect, doesn't get. Our expectations are higher than Everest.

It appears that in this way the head teacher believed that the message underlying all aspects of the school would be a unified and consistent one, and that teachers would practice what she thought demonstrated good teaching. A similar approach was apparent when she talked about implementing new aspects into the school curriculum.

The students' ignorance bothered me as well as the social tensions, and its possible implications, between different groups in the country, so we decided on these topics.

In anticipation of a prospective external visit, everybody was called together to be briefed for that visit:

You should check students' notebooks, refer to their work and see that they correct accordingly. The visitors will check students' notebooks. You do it anyway, but now you have to do it better. I want the school to be instructionally and visually prepared. I don't want you to be embarrassed by the guests' questions, let's look excellent in the things we know how to do the best.

She patted them on the back, but at the same time, she was warning them. There was a precise prescription:

You must mention the October war, when we were on the verge of extinction. Each child has to have a notebook where he will relate to our main topic: 'Each generation passes on what it learns' (a free translation). Every month one of the teachers will prepare 4 pages where she will summarize the important topics for the current month. You have to have a corner in your class where this information is presented.

She made use of the findings in the external report and of their implied demands, whether as a tool for achieving what she herself had considered important, or in order simply to comply with the demands. Another example for her compliance to external demands might be her remark to teachers when she asked for classes profiles: ...because next week, she said, I have to show them to the inspector.

During her years of headship at that school fifteen experienced teachers had been asked by her to leave. Most of those who left had been living in nearby settlements, the same as the students, while the new teachers came from various places outside the group of settlements. The head teacher perceived the new teachers as having other perceptions of education, values other than those the experienced ones had. She claimed:

The new teachers do not feel as part of the school; essentially they are more heterogeneous. They represent the 'current Israel'.

The SMT and the teachers

There were fifty teachers at school M, all women. Half of them had joined the school in the last five years. Fifteen of those who had left had been asked by the head teacher to do so, whereas the rest retired voluntarily. There were thirty instructors who were in charge of students' after-school activities.

Each one of the SMT, the three deputy heads, was in charge of two grade levels that is grades 1 and 2, grades 3 and 4 and so on.

Their responsibilities included:

- Deciding with the head teacher on the school's priorities, its aims, and methods of implementation.
- Disseminating those priorities and aims among other staff members
- Monitoring their implementation by reading class profiles once in a month or every fortnight.

Apart from the three deputy heads, there were teams of teachers who were responsible for the content and the way that specific subject area was taught. It was mainly for maths and literacy. According to the head teacher, those teams of teachers (of specific subject area) met once in a while to discuss issues concerning their subjects which were later discussed with the rest of the teachers. Those teams had the role of further

developing the school's curriculum with the teachers and of improving students' achievements in the subject fields for which they were responsible (said the head teacher).

Most teachers declared that students' and adults' learning at their school was valued:

– We always learn about ourselves: staff have to learn from processes that it carries out.

– There is motivation, a culture of learning and evaluating.

Change was regarded as a positive matter. As they felt that the topics chosen for the INSET were not very pertinent to their needs, they believed INSET didn't have a high value at their school. Each teacher studied outside school, sharing her expertise with her staff members. This knowledge dissemination usually occurred in the small groups mentioned above.

The head teacher and the teacher herself decided together what area would be studied by that teacher on extra-mural courses. A teacher said:

It influences the work at school in both senses: our work at school is more professional, and we get the opportunities outside school to share and consult with colleagues.

People's roles and responsibilities at the school seemed to be clear. The hierarchy was quite fixed. The responsibility of the role holders was clear, while most of the teachers stayed remote from the decision-making processes – for instance they took a limited part in defining school's priorities. Although teachers knew to an extent the school's priorities, they did not always agree with it.

There were structures to facilitate the sharing and flow of information. Teachers reported that there were regular one-hour weekly staff meetings in which teachers who taught at the same grade or the same subject met to monitor their progress, and to plan their next steps. They believed that team work was important. But meetings of the whole staff were rare, and were only held for specific purposes. Consequently the

staff did not have many opportunities to clarify their own attitudes, beliefs and values, and whole school approaches were limited. The fragmented structure as well as the limited part they took in decision-making had lessened the teachers' involvement in the school. Nevertheless, most of them described the atmosphere as mutually supportive in that they felt supported by their colleagues in the daily life in school.

The reports

1st report 2001

A summary of the report's findings

It appeared in the report that few students agreed that their teachers are taking into consideration the differences between them (22%), a similar number of them saw a clear direction within a clear framework of discipline but two third of them agreed that they had good relationships with their teachers. All the teachers that answered the phone interviews agreed that they had autonomy in their classes, but only 70% agreed that they are having part in processes of decision making, their expectations of their students were high. Most of them felt motivated and autonomous and agreed that they had good professional relationships. However, only 30% answered positively when they have been asked about the parents as partners to educational processes. Half of the respondent teachers saw themselves as having a high professional level. Students' achievements varied.

The dissemination of the report

After having read it at home, the head teacher presented the report to the maths instructor and to the deputy heads. They read it together and discussed the results. But it was not disseminated any further, though most of the teachers knew about its existence.

The staff's reactions

The context in which the report was received was already negative as the head teacher's view was that they had been forced to undertake the external evaluation procedure. The report arriving late had angered the staff, rendering it less effective did not improve matters. The head teacher criticized the manner in which the data of the external evaluation had been gathered.

The phone interview cannot be reliable. While being interviewed the interviewee does not see the questions. She does other things; I am not sure to what extent they really think about their answers.

and suggested that:

They should come to the school, (where) the teacher will be more available for them; it will be much more serious.

Other staff members felt that because the evaluation procedure was unfair, and the questions not clear, the report could not be reliable.

How the new knowledge was used?

The only way of using the report's findings at this stage was the obligatory one: writing the action plan. Each school was obliged to write an action plan. This regulation was launched at the same time as the external evaluation procedure was, assuming that its writing would consider the issues addressed by the report. This was not the case at school M. The first part of writing was done in a group of fifteen teachers, divided into mission groups. Each group represented one subject area – science, maths, English and literacy – and had to define the aims for that subject. Ultimately, most of the work was done by the head teacher and two of her deputies during the school holiday. The head teacher and one deputy presented the plan to the school's inspector and to a local educational authority representative. The head teacher thought that the presentation and defense of the action plan was the most important part. At this stage the connections between the external report and the action plan were based mainly on the fact that, technically, they were both part of the external evaluation procedure. The issues raised by the report were partly addressed by the action plan.

Due to the fact that they were what the head teacher called 'a learning school' she further claimed that writing the action plan did not make much difference, nor did it have much impact on the school.

2nd report 2002

A summary of the report's findings

Many more students agreed, within the collection of the data for this report, that regarding discipline, there was clear direction within a clear framework. Their responses to other indicators did not change significantly. However teachers' responses did change in some indicators: fewer had high expectations of their students, and felt autonomy; more of them agreed that they had high professional level and more than previously saw the parents as partners. Students' achievements varied, they were a bit lower in maths.

The dissemination of the report

The head teacher's first step was to read the report at home, and compare it to the previous one. Then she was ready to share it, to an extent, with other staff members. At this stage the head teacher met each of the teachers who were responsible for a specific subject area to discuss the results of that subject. Following this, the graphs of the report were put on overheads which were presented at a staff meeting. At that meeting they referred mainly to parts of school's culture, trying to reveal what aspects satisfied them and other aspects that did not. They did not relate to any other section of the report.

The parents' central committee was invited to discuss these same issues, as well as being expected to discuss students' achievements, with an emphasis on the issues that had to be improved.

Another dissemination procedure was undertaken by the head teacher who met all staff teaching each grade for an hour, in order to analyse the report (not the report's findings) with respect to the different indicators in it. Her aim was to check whether teachers and students knew the indicators and whether they related to them in their teaching/learning.

Although some dissemination procedures did take place at school, most teachers didn't feel that they had had an opportunity to share the external report findings. Teachers and parents did not have the opportunity to read the report findings they only got acquainted to it by the head teacher presentation or by reading parts of the

findings if they were teaching at a relevant class. This might be the reason for one teacher to say:

The report has to be available to everybody. We have to read it in our small groups and relate to it. I don't know much about the report.

The staff's reactions

The teachers and the head teacher alike said that they had always studied anyway, and that the external evaluation procedure, despite its having the advantages of being external, did not always fit the reality of the school:

I prefer my own evaluation; I know the people and I will not ask about something that doesn't exist at school. (The head teacher)

The above was reinforced by one of the teachers who said:

Maybe the report made things clearer. But we did things anyway; we didn't wait for the report in order to start working.

Generally, the members of staff who knew about the report were not surprised by its findings although it was interesting for some of them to get to know the students' opinions of teachers and schooling, and to read the parts where a comparison to the national average was drawn.

Although teachers realized that the external report...*reflects what you do, from an outside point of view*...most of those who knew about the report perceived it as a tool for external authorities to make comparisons among students from different schools and between their achievements and the academic level expected of this age. Others thought it aimed at examining the extent that teachers' studying brings about improvement, at investigating the relations within the staff, and checking if they were capable of working at different levels with different students. Thus they perceived it mainly as a tool for external purposes, useful for official and semi-official bodies outside the school. Most of the teachers who knew about the report thought that the information in it was not relevant to their school's needs. Only one deputy head

suggested that it aimed:...to give us an account of school and a basis for defining our action plan and to promote students' achievements and their abilities.

Other staff members were very critical of the procedure and its consequences:

Lots of dishonesty is embedded in the procedure...although they declare that it is solely a tool for the school to work with, inspectors compare schools on the basis of the report; teachers prepare students for the exams. Being under stress some had opened the exams papers before the time of the exam.

How was the new knowledge used?

Teachers' distance from the centre of decision-making at school was reinforced by the fact that they didn't take part in the discussions concerned with how to use the external report findings. Consequently, teachers were not clear as to what belonged to the external evaluation implementation and what was part of the implementation of other internal procedures. For example, one of the teachers whose classes were examined that year said that she did not know what the head teacher did with the findings but they, in their small group, had discussed parts of it and thought of ways to improve. She was quite confused, saying:

I don't exactly remember... but each teacher is responsible for promoting his/her class, there are no support systems.

However, it is still possible to try and summarise the findings referring to the use of the new knowledge in two main areas: teachers' work and students' achievements and the action plan.

Teachers' work and students' achievements

The implementation procedures included changes that had been made in the procedures of students' assessment and monitoring. These procedures were mentioned as follow-up techniques. They included the 'head teacher's exams', the profiles that teachers had to draw up and their one-hour weekly meetings which were dedicated to summing up what they did in class during that week and to planning the next week's

activities. They felt as if these meetings became now more sophisticated by having new monitoring tools, as specified bellow:

- Three times a year the 'head teacher's exam' was conducted in maths, language and English (the same subject areas that appeared in the report). It was designed by the head teacher and the subject area coordinator. Its format had become similar to the external exams' format. One of the teachers explained it by the fact that the external exams had a good rationale and related to a wider learning perspective rather than to the last taught subject. She added: *It influences further planning of the curriculum at school.* The outcomes of these exams were summed up in each class profile, which was forwarded to the head teacher and filed.
- Profiles of students' achievements were defined every fortnight or every month. The themes for the exam were established together with the deputy heads. These profiles were examined within the small group of teachers, the deputy head was in charge of this procedure. Profiles were checked in order to identify the problems and the reasons for success. Difficulties that emerged in the exams were tackled in a whole class forum or in an individual forum.
- *In maths*, said one of the teachers, *we do much work individually or in small groups, so that we can closely monitor students' difficulties and allocate what kind of help does every one needs in order to improve.*
- A computer skills instructor was hired to improve these skills for certain teachers who were found to be less competent in this area.

The action plan

Teachers' accounts on being distant from the centre of decision making were reinforced by one of the subject area coordinators who said that they (the role holders) were responsible for dealing with the specific points of the findings which were found to be weak and improving the situation. These points were set down to be taken on board as school priorities in the consequent action plan. To the same point the head teacher added an example:

The flow of information between the head teacher and the teachers was found to be low, (Improving) it became one of the school's priorities for the following year.

Different impressions were collected from different members of staff. Whereas two of the deputy heads mentioned Meytzav as the basis for defining the action plan, for the head teacher and another teacher it was one more source influencing the action plan, but not the only source. The head teacher mentioned school's self-evaluation, monitoring and testing as a more significant source of their action plan.

However, it is possible to see the connections to the external report and its influences by reading the changes that occurred in the action plan. At this stage they related to specific deficiencies that were presented in the report's findings.

Meytzav, a deputy head said, highlighted what needed more attention so that the plan would be designed adequately.

The impact of the report

Essentially the report's dominance of school life seemed to be limited. Very different impressions were collected from the head teacher and the staff. Whereas the head teacher perceived herself as willing to change, and to draw conclusions from the external source of information, there were some topics that were mentioned only by her as being influenced by the report findings, such as the school's regulations.

She also mentioned the enhanced cooperation with parents and an improvement in the coherence of the school's curriculum and the continuity between classes.

She felt that she had to enlarge the cycles of involvement and to share the development of the school's aims and the action plan with her staff. Nevertheless, she didn't feel this was only due to the external report. She said: *I had always done it, but others started to do it because of the external evaluation. Meytzav demands larger cycles of work. It's no longer the worry of the head teacher alone.*

Some teachers referred to the report's impact on teachers' professionalism. They thought that receiving the report had improved their self-reflection. Those teachers took it as constructive criticism and start thinking of how to improve. When they read the report they tried to think whether

...we were loyal to our own declared school's aims and whether the priorities we set could be identified by reading the improvements in the report.

They kept looking for the connections between the report's findings and the reality they knew.

3rd report – 2003

A summary of the report's findings

Between the second and the third report the only noteworthy change had occurred in the percentages of students' positive responses to their teachers giving them fair and effective feedback (from 68% to 45%), and again more students agreed that there was clear direction within a clear framework regarding discipline. Fewer teachers than previously felt that they are being consulted in processes of decision making, otherwise, not much change had been recorded. Students' achievements were low.

The dissemination of the report

As with the previous report most teachers had not had the opportunity to read the report itself. Thus their accounts and perceptions of the report could not be collected. The head teacher did not question the school's dissemination procedures nor did she make any connection between these procedures and teachers' limited knowledge of the report.

The staff's reactions

The head teacher offered a justification for staff response to the external evaluation including the school's report. She questioned the report's reliability, because she thought that the process of the data-gathering was not efficient. Furthermore she doubted the integrity claimed for the external investigation: *"while the declared aim of the external evaluation report was to be a tool for the head teacher and her staff to*

use for improvement, the schools' inspectors use it to compare schools. In cases of parental choice (where parents can choose the school for their child) it damaged the school's reputation", she claimed. This was irrelevant, to her view, because:

When you have to make judgment and to choose a school for your child, you cannot relate to one exam – you have to have a more reliable data base.

Yet again teachers' responses varied: whereas one teacher said that receiving the report put superfluous pressure on them, another added that it enhanced the connections among them because they immediately took steps to improve.

How was the new knowledge used?

The school's action plan was more complex and had gained more sophistication. Its different parts were now the exact duplication of the external report:

The school's pedagogical culture, including: the students' achievements, the school's curriculum, and the methods of instruction and learning.

The school culture, including: the school discipline, the relationships among students and between students and their teachers.

The school as a working place, including team work, the parents as partners and teachers' studies.

The action plan design was now being done with more teacher involvement. The head teacher met every teacher for a discussion followed by her (the head teacher's) written summary, which later provided the basis for the action plan's design.

The head teacher was aware of the low expectations of teachers, which were revealed in the report, and said that they were trying to raise teachers' expectations. She could not specify on the way that they were about to do it. Moreover she suggested that the low students' achievements required more hours dedicated to the particular subject area involved.

No other changes were mentioned in relation to the implementation procedure or the impact of the report on the school's life.

Changes over time

The following table presents a summary of key elements of the three reports (2001–2003), showing the changes in teachers' and students' accounts. However, because it does not necessarily reflect the accounts of the same population it is not indicative for itself it rather implies on the change over time.

Table no. 3: Changes over time, key elements of Meytzav reports

The topics of the report	Percentages of positive answers – 1 st report	Percentages of positive answers – 2 nd report	Percentages of positive answers – 3 rd report
The characteristics of the school's pedagogical environment			
Students believed that their teachers were taking into consideration the differences between students	22 %	18%	18%
Students thought that their teachers used a variety of teaching methods	74%	65%	No data
Students thought that feedback was fair and effective	65%	68%	45%
Teachers wrote that they used traditional assessment techniques	No data	5%	No data
Teachers wrote that there was a clear policy for assessment of students	45%	78%	No data
The school environment			
Students wrote that they had good relationships with teachers	70%	65%	65%
Students wrote that, regarding discipline, there was clear direction within a clear framework	25%	78%	92%
Students' achievements and teachers' expectations			
Teachers had high expectations of the students	90%	55%	58%
Professional development and the school as a working place			
Teachers learning Maths	63%	45%	53%
Teachers learning Hebrew	68%	20%	40%
Teachers learning Science	40%	90%	0%
Teachers learning English	0%	30%	100%
Teachers perceived the head teacher as a pedagogical authority	84%	90%	85%
Teachers' felt that they were being consulted in the decision-making process	72%	73%	65%
Teachers perceived the parents as partners in the educational process	30%	58%	60%
Teachers perceived themselves as having a high level, professionally speaking	50%	85%	79%
Teachers felt that they had autonomy	98%	85%	No data
Teachers felt motivated	90%	93%	94%
Teachers felt that they had good professional relationship	92%	87%	90%
Teachers felt burdened and worn out	20%	30%	21%

In the above it is possible to see that in the second report there was an increase in positive responses in a few areas, notably the clarity of the assessment and the discipline policies. The later gained further improvement in the third report. The third report also showed that parents were perceived to a higher extent as partners, and there was a feeling amongst the teachers of having a high level of professionalism when it is compared to the first report.

Teachers were now using a variety of teaching methods. Their expectations of the students and their sense of being autonomous had declined.

A significant decline was apparent in the third report in relation to the extent to which the students felt they were getting a fair and effective feedback. Teachers' expectations of the students remained low, as did other indicators such as seeing the parents as partners, the relationships between students and teachers, and teachers' responsiveness to students' diversity.

It might be that the improved clarity of the assessment and the discipline policies enhanced the teachers' feeling of having a high professional level. The same improvement might have caused teachers' feeling of being less autonomous: having a shared, clear policy restricted their autonomy but improved their feeling of being professional. The deterioration in the percentage of students who felt that they were getting a fair and effective feedback, the low percentage of students that reported on good relationships with teachers and the low percentage of teachers' expectations of their students (although it might be only the result of teachers' disappointment in the students' achievements), might imply a difficulty in teachers–students relationships.

The dissemination procedures

It was always the head teacher who got the report and had to decide who she was going to share it with. After having read the first report, she only shared it with the maths instructor and the three deputy heads. However, for the second report she shared the information with a much larger circle: the different parts of students' rate of achievements were shared with teachers who were responsible for the relevant subject areas, some of the information, especially regarding the school's environment, was shared with the whole staff, and some of it was shared with the parents' central

committee. These procedures did not change when the school received the third report.

Teachers did not have a real opportunity to discuss all findings, but the head teacher used the report (not its findings) as a check-list for a discussion with a group of teachers to check the extent to which they relate to the different indicators of the report in their classes.

The staff's reactions

The staff of the school felt that the first report was a result of a procedure that they were forced to undergo. The way they gathered the data, that provided the foundation for that report, was criticized, as were the questions of the external evaluation questionnaires and the test (students' attainment exams) itself. This criticism resulted in resistance and angry reactions toward the report. The first report remained unrevealed to a large number of the teachers.

Receiving the second report the head teacher and the teachers alike felt that although the report did not always reflect the reality they knew, they were not surprised by its findings. Teachers felt that the whole procedure put an unnecessary stress on them. While the head teacher thought that to some extent it was good to have an external point of view, teachers mainly saw it as a tool for external purposes and claimed that it was not relevant to their needs. However it was interesting for them to read students' opinions of the school.

The third report was received with extra criticism regarding its reliability and others issues of accuracy and consistency concerning the external evaluation procedure which influenced the findings of the report.

The use of the findings

Writing the action plan was perceived as part of the external evaluation procedure; it was obligatory and was the only implementation procedure that took place as a result of receiving the first report. Teachers took part in defining the aims for the different subject areas, while the head teacher and two of her deputies did the writing up. The presentation of the action plan to the school's inspector and the LEA representatives

was perceived by the head teacher as the most important part of it. With the third report the action plan's different sections became the same as the report's sections, and more teachers were involved in defining it.

Having very limited and fragmented knowledge of the report's findings, teachers could not differentiate between procedures at the school that were the consequent of these findings and other procedures.

The head teacher acknowledged that teachers' had low expectations and said that they were trying to improve this situation but she couldn't report on any specific action that was being taken. She also mentioned providing extra hours to teach the subjects in which students' achievements appeared to be low.

The impact of the reports

At the beginning of the process most of the staff members did not feel that the report had an impact on schooling. Subsequently the impact was still perceived as limited, the areas of its impact being perceived differently by the head teacher and other staff members.

While the head teacher saw the main impact as making school's regulations clearer, enhancing co-operation between the school and the parents and improving the coherence of the school's curriculum, teachers felt its impact on their professionalism, and on the enhanced procedures of students' assessment and their monitoring.

The report was perceived as one source among others for the action plan's definition.

The site of the research: School H

History and physical description

The school was established in 1998 in the same city as school G. It was established in a newly built neighbourhood, mainly for the children of young couples who came to live there and most have more than one child at the school. The school's fostering index²⁷ is medium: 6 out of 10 as there are few families at a low socio-economic level. About 30% of the children were not born in Israel, 3% were new immigrants (less than two years in the country) and 5% of the families were single-parent units, which were considered quite a high percentage in Israel. The school's population has grown ever since it was established. There were 100 students in the first year, and 200 new students joined the school in each of the two succeeding years. In each of the following two years 80-100 new students joined. At the time of the research there were 650 students in 18 classes, 3 at each grade. Although the average academic level was quite reasonable, the constant need to absorb new students *made it difficult to focus on raising academic achievement*, claimed the head teacher. However, in the last few years, when the student numbers have started to stabilise, it had become easier to assess, and attempt to raise the academic level.

The school building was spacious, with an interesting lay-out; each group of classes of the same grade (3 classes) was located in its own corridor. The building was encircled by a spacious playground. The entrance hall offered a proud display of students' work and patriotic symbols. The school's constitution was on the wall opposite to the entrance. It consisted of four sections: The Family, The Culture, Individual Rights, and Tolerance and Mutual Respect. Each category was divided into behaviour and reward/sanctions. The usual wording was: *'if you don't keep...you will have to....'* In the Family category the only paragraph said: *'it is prohibited for parents to speak about or clarify any event with other students; they can only approach the staff of the school'*. Below the constitution the school's aims, educational policy and

²⁷ 'Fostering index' is the Israeli term to define the average socio-economic level of the families at the school. 10 being the lowest category. It influences the school's budget.

attitudes were presented. The letters on this board were blurred as it has not been renewed for a while.

First impressions

The school was characterized by a calm and co-operative culture. One of my visits was during the year that the school culture was put on the agenda as a priority. Support mechanisms had been created, for example, a teacher was given the responsibility for designing an action plan to improve the culture, a plan that was distributed to all teachers; suitable procedures were established, and physical conditions were created to fit the requirements of the new regulations. Clear regulations were defined and shared among all, including putting more responsibility on students for their own behaviour. For example as a first step students were required to try and solve disagreements amongst themselves.

During break time students could play outside, but many preferred to stay inside as there were lots of social activities organized by the students in senior classes. Students who did not take part in these activities played quietly everywhere. When the break was over each student was invited to tell the class about an example of good behaviour that s/he had observed during break time. These good deeds were praised once a month in a special ceremony.

The orderly culture was also apparent in my two first visits to the school, which were well organised. On my second visit, the head teacher called each of my interviewees into the room where I set myself up. There were some teachers who had known about my visit, while for others it was a surprise. Nonetheless, most of them were co-operative and, consequently, the exchanges at most interviews flowed freely.

In the staff meeting where teachers were asked to fill in the research questionnaires all teachers that attended the meeting (19) filled them in. Although they were not happy about the timing (at the end of a working day and the start of a staff meeting), they showed no objections or cynicism. The head teacher encouraged them to finish the task; it was a co-operative, relaxed atmosphere, fostered partly by the head teacher approach.

These impressions of co-operation were off-set to an extent when the head teacher asked me to postpone my next planned visit. She claimed the need for postponement was owing to a redistribution of roles among the staff. When the visit eventually took place I was prevented from observing a staff meeting where Meytzav report was being discussed. The head teacher's explanation was that teachers might be embarrassed and would not speak openly if I was there.

Generally, teachers felt that there was a culture of openness, they were aware of the school's priorities, and knew what was expected of them. Furthermore teachers had opportunities to share their knowledge, though less so their attitudes and beliefs which they did not feel encouraged to offer.

The staff

The head teacher

The head teacher was appointed to the school from its inception and it was her first position as a head teacher. She believed that the life of a school was dynamic and could always be improved. *Any educational system is about change*, she said, *and anyone who joined the school had to believe in change*.

As the school expanded, the major challenge, as the head teacher perceived it, was to make all new teachers feel involved with the school and responsible for its students. The head teacher felt that the fact that the school was no longer growing enabled the staff's sense of responsibility and involvement to be consolidated. She was trying to do so by using, on one hand, procedures of delegation and on the other, giving the teachers the opportunity to be heard. For example, several procedures that involved self-reflection and gave the opportunity for teachers' voice to be heard were applied. Each teacher had to report on the extent of the implementation of each of the school's aims, and her difficulties in carrying it out. Teachers were asked to express their opinions to whether or not they thought the existing aims were worth striving for. When the rules regarding break-time having been changed, teachers were asked to give feedback concerning break twice a year. The head teacher always spoke in first person plural – 'we', it was never 'them' or 'me'. She felt she offered real responsibility to the coordinators, and encouraged them to share their responsibility

by giving the teachers the opportunity to present to the staff their successes as well as the problems they faced in class.

She also believed that if many staff members were involved in the planning stages it would enhance their responsibility.

I want to believe that if teachers set up the aims they will be willing to work to implement it.

Consequently, all teachers took part in developing the action plan.

The head teacher herself saw her role as leading and setting the ethos of staff work. For instance, when they discussed the report's findings:

.... no criticism will be carried out; rather, it will aim at promoting processes and improving achievements. The aim of the meeting will be to think together, to take mutual responsibility and find the right solutions by drawing conclusions.

She also was responsible for the monitoring of teachers' work by observing lessons and following up the action plan's implementation. Teachers perceived her as a pedagogical leader relying on her to provide them with plans directing them as to how to improve their students' performance:

When we have difficulties in raising academic achievements of students, we can rely on the head teacher, because she has plans that instruct us of how to improve certain points.

The SMT and the teachers

The staff was comprised of young teachers (1-5 years' experience) and very experienced ones (15-20 years), all of whom were women. Usually in the group of three classes of the same grade one teacher would be very experienced and the other two would be young teachers. With this combination the head teacher hoped to

benefit from both the young ones who were more motivated and the more experienced who were more stable.

People's roles and responsibilities at school H were clear to all. The SMT was comprised in the first instance of the three grade coordinators (one responsible for the young age 1st–2nd grades, one for the middle 3rd–4th grades and one for oldest students, in 5th–6th grades). Apart from being a grade coordinator each of these also held another role, such as pedagogical coordinator, person responsible for school trips, or coordinator of social events. There was a further group of three teachers who were SMT members, each with responsibility for one of the subject areas at school – maths, science, and literacy.

Each SMT member presented the head teacher with a monthly report of her activities with the group of teachers for whom she was responsible. The SMT met three times a year to discuss improvements and difficulties. The head teacher perceived them as 'a *support system*' for teachers. They acted as facilitators, with responsibility for setting up and directing meetings whose objectives were to make substantive changes in all areas such as setting and defining aims for the curriculum, and following up implementation working closely with the teachers to accomplish this.

The coordinators responsible for a subject area had to further develop the school's curriculum in this respect. These plans were presented at staff meetings. Their responsibility also included follow-up procedures. Each exam that was carried out in a class had to be approved beforehand by the coordinator, who also discussed the exam results with the teachers. In order to enhance mutual responsibility and create the feeling of a coherent system, summing up the exam results was done by relating to the level of success of all students in each question and not by class.

Our aim is to improve for the next test. We help each other to reach this aim.

In September 2003 two SMT members were replaced. One left for a sabbatical, and another asked to leave her job although the reasons were not given.

It was interesting to realise that the head teacher's attitude to her staff (seeing herself as a part of them) was reciprocal. Teachers saw themselves and the head teacher as sharing their position in the hierarchy:

The fact that they (the Ministry of Education) don't explain to us, and that we have rather to comply, disturbs me; I assume that she (the head teacher) is in the same situation.

The head teacher's effort to make all teachers involved and feel responsible seemed to bear fruit. She said:

There are moments at the school when you can see the involvement of all: teachers work late hours and are devoted to their work

To the same point some of the teachers of the younger age groups saw themselves as responsible for the achievements of these students when they reached the higher grades:

If in the 5th grade they have to be in a certain level, it implies that at a younger age we have to prepare them appropriately, so that the right themes will be emphasised and teaching will be maintained at a suitable level.

Moreover, those teachers who were not class teachers (those specializing in teaching art or gym, for instance) felt responsible for students' difficulties as well as for their successes. This all contributed to a general feeling of togetherness and mutual responsibility:

Although I am complimented as a consequence of the good exam results of my students, I do not feel especially good, because others worked as well. Maybe I was lucky. ...

Apparently teachers felt that commitment was shared among all of them, and that they were supported by their colleagues in the daily life of the school. They felt that the

learning of both students and adults was valued in their school, and agreed that courses enlarged their personal knowledge to a larger extent than their practical knowledge. Although they could influence the content of INSET, they did not perceive the topics chosen for the INSET as very pertinent to their needs. All teachers took courses outside the school, and the head teacher tried to direct them according to the school's needs. Usually when a teacher had a specific responsibility at the school she made use of an external course to specialize in it. There were teachers who took more than one course at a time.

The reports

1st report 2001

A summary of the report's findings

Generally, about half of the students who answered the external evaluation questionnaire agreed upon positive culture indicators at the school, such as: a fair and effective feedback of their teachers and teachers using a variety of teaching methods. More than half of them agreed that they had good relationships with their teachers. About third of the students believed that their teachers are taking into consideration their diversity and that there was a clear direction within a clear framework of discipline. Student achievements were reported as being average, including the whole range. All the teachers who answered the phone interviews perceived their head teacher as a pedagogical authority, felt motivated and autonomous, and perceived themselves as having good professional relationships less so for a high professional level. Less than 80% of them perceived the parents as partners.

The dissemination of the report

At first the head teacher discussed the findings and what was to be done with the SMT. In a subsequent staff meeting only the parts relating to student achievement were put on overheads for presentation to the staff. During the presentation the teachers gave a running commentary that expressed their ideas of how to improve. The head teacher emphasized again and again that there were differences among the achievements of different classes, although while presenting the findings she deliberately did not point at a specific class:

By presenting the results I aim to discuss the lessons learnt and plan what are we going to do about it. It must be the concern of all, not the concern of a specific class.

At that stage the teachers did not get the opportunity to become familiar with other parts of the report.

The staff's reactions

The head teacher and teachers criticised the report. They felt it was detached from the school's reality, and limited. The head teacher described it at that stage as frightening and a teacher explained:

It is a threat for the teachers: wait a minute, don't I teach well all year long, do you doubt it?improvement is a process, the external evaluation is not a process, it is done at one point in time, it doesn't give the feeling that they really want to help us to improve.

But, she added:

After a day of bereavement we get up, regroup to do the job, and grow.

However, it is important to indicate that the head teacher claimed that in most cases the exam results of their own classes were similar to the grades they were given in the Meytzav exams. At the same time teachers were disappointed by the findings of the report.

As for the process of data collection the head teacher expressed her doubts as to how genuine the teachers' answers to the phone interviews had been and therefore to the report's objectivity, and a teacher related to the frustration of students writing the exams in the sense that, sometimes, students were not used to the exam format and their teacher could not help them.

How was the new knowledge used?

Due to the fact that most teachers were presented only with the parts of students' achievements in the report, it is not surprising that the main implementation procedures had to do with trying to enhance students' achievements in various ways:

- There was a flexible, dynamic, timetable. If in a specific class achievements in one subject area were low, there was a reinforcement of that subject. It was carried out by conducting 'marathons' of five weeks where extra monitoring was carried out in order to decrease the learning gaps.
- An extra teacher joined the class, to facilitate work in small groups with students who had difficulties.
- In all classes an extended follow-up was carried out: after each of three exams during that year, teachers had to submit a plan for improving the achievements of every student no matter whether s/he had been successful in the exam or had failed it.
- The head teacher conducted a follow-up of the test results. The results were summed up by the teacher on a specifically designed form, where she had to place the students' names in order from the best to the weakest, add possible explanations for the results, and identify the way that she intended to continue to work with each of the students. This form was handed to the head teacher. The head teacher believed that:

This procedure enhances teachers' responsibility for students' achievements.

A teacher reinforced this view by saying:

We always check ourselves, especially the underachievers and the weak students. We are occupied by the thoughts of how to improve their achievements and how to reduce their number.

The impact of the report

The report's impact on the way the school was run was perceived as very limited at that stage. Most teachers did not think that knowing that the school had undergone an evaluation process improved their work. The external procedure did not play a significant part in the school's agenda. A teacher said:

– More important is what we do, our daily life, and not the report...

– We know our students. We see them everyday and every hour. We don't need an external body to evaluate them.

2nd report 2002

A summary of the report's findings

In the collection of the data for this report many more teachers agreed that the policy of assessment of students got clearer, fewer teachers had high expectations from their students, and less teachers responded to most of the indicators regarding their professional development and the school as a working place as positive. Students' responds to most indicators almost did not changed, though their achievements appeared to be low.

The dissemination of the report

Although the report was on the table in the staff room, none of the teachers had read it. Upon its arrival the head teacher discussed it only with the SMT. She did this much later with the rest of the staff (in Nov 2003 they had their first staff meeting to discuss the previous year's report, whose data had been collected in 2001). That was the meeting I was forbidden to observe, because it was felt that my presence would restrict the openness among its participants.

A paper distributed by the head teacher to the teachers in anticipation of that meeting was the source for their discussion. It included a general description of Meytzav and its aims, and detailed the different parts of the report. After being presented with a summary of the report the teachers were asked to consider questions suggested by the head teacher, which had been taken from the website of the Evaluation Department at the Ministry of Education, not adapted for this particular school.

The main focus of the staff meeting was in the comparison of the school's report outcomes with those of similar schools. Most of the meeting consisted of the head teacher's report on the findings and her suggestions as to how to improve. At the end of it some statements were written, such as '*we ought to make an effort even with the weakest student*', or '*we shouldn't be too generous when marking*'.

Although teachers said that they had opportunities to share the information of the report, most of them did not take part in its analysis. They did not feel that they were being consulted regarding the implementation procedures.

The staff's reactions

Staff reaction to the second report was interesting because on one hand they saw it as a tool for external purposes, whereas on the other they referred to it on a very personal level. All teachers perceived the external report as an external tool for accountability purposes:

It aims to evaluate the school by external criteria, in order to reduce the gaps between divergent populations groups in the country.

It means to check students' level with reference to the Ministry of Education's expectations. They (the people at the Ministry of Education) believe that then the system will become more efficient by reducing expectations or improving the level of teaching.

Consequently teachers criticised the external procedure. They claimed that:

Not all schools are carrying out the exam procedures in an honest way. The report is fertile ground for fraud.

One exam cannot reflect the real situation of the class; it doesn't respect our work processes. It is detached from our routine, detached from the 'field'

One teacher tried to suggest a way of improving the external evaluation process:

A professional representative has to deliver the report. Not just 'throw' it at the school and leave it there. They have to explain, to show us that they are not against us. This is the only way I can learn from this report.

This might imply that the way it was done harmed her ability to make the best use of it. Although these were their students' achievements, some teachers perceived it, to an extent, as their own personal achievements:

A teacher whose class gets good results feels good: if the students did well you (a teacher) did well. There is tension because you want to succeed. If a great number of students fail we feel that we have failed.

However, some teachers saw it differently. They perceived the report as the concern of all because, although it had been applied at one point in time, it reflected a process. Thus all the teachers, past and present, of the students who were being examined were responsible for the results. A teacher of the younger classes expressed this:

Although the external evaluation referred to the older students, it is a matter of a process, so it is the concern of all: when we get the report, we are happy where needed and sad where needed and immediately think what it means, and what we have to do...

At the same time the report itself was perceived by the teachers as comprehensive, and dealing with areas that the school did not always have the time to consider. It was perceived as non-judgmental presenting the findings without referring to a specific teacher, user-friendly, clear, and a resource for learning. It was also perceived as facilitating the process of identifying what needed to be improved. This might have been the reason for a SMT member to say:

Each year we are cleverer than we were last year and know better how to read it. We try very hard to disconnect the results from a specific teacher,

and to be non-judgmental. It is a picture of a specific situation at a specific time; it doesn't say anything about the teacher.

How was the new knowledge used?

Most of the teachers claimed that, although they did not take part in the consultation regarding the implementation procedures, nor did they have a say in the report's analysis, the findings of the report had influenced decisions that were taken at the school (the details are in 'the dissemination' section). It was probably the decisions taking by the head teacher and the SMT. These decisions, which included an extra emphasis on topics that the report identified as needing improvement, initiated a range of implementation procedures. These were strategies for self-evaluation, the monitoring of students' achievements as well as allocating resources for that purpose, and writing the action plan.

School self-evaluation

The school engaged with the external evaluation in a dialogic way in order to take further the internal agenda for evaluation. The report's findings concerning violence at the school were not good. Further evaluation was carried out at the school as to explore the external evaluation findings. The impressions of staff and students were collected, and it became clear that the main problems occurred during break times. Consequently, actions were taken, which resulted in a greater responsibility shared among teachers and students.

Teachers' work and students' achievements

With the aim of improving students' achievements, which appeared to be low in the report, several procedures were applied:

- Extra monitoring – the report revealed low achievements of special needs' students and also students newly arrived in the country. The head teacher demanded extra monitoring for these students, so that, within a reasonable time, they would improve their level of achievement in specific subjects.

- Generally, the level of student academic achievements was monitored by exams developed by the external instructors and the subject coordinators in the school. The students were examined, and their results diagnosed, three times each year at the beginning of the year, at the end of the first semester, and at the end of the year. This process was applied to four subjects: maths, language, English and science. The same subjects of the external exams.
- Enhanced teachers' learning – with the aim of improving students' achievements in a specific subject, teachers were sent to take extra-mural courses or an external teachers' instructor was brought in.
- Allocating resources – when students' achievements in a specific subject area were not good, the teaching of that subject would be reinforced in the following year by an expert teacher or by changing teaching strategies such as teaching in small groups. At the same time teachers said that:

When the date of the Meytzav exam approaches there is more emphasis on the subjects that will be examined. More hours are dedicated to these subjects.

The action plan (AP)

Some of the teachers indicated that the action plan was only connected to the report's findings to a limited extent. Others said that there was a very close connection between the two. The former group saw the report as one starting point among many for the action plan, such as the National Curriculum for Literacy, the standards in Language and Maths which were published by the Ministry of Education, the school's needs, and teachers' initiatives.

But when the head teacher announced the various parts of the action plan, it became clear that they replicated the parts of the report: it seemed that the external report had more influence on the AP than the teachers were willing to admit. Those who had seen the tight connection between the report and the AP pointed to the fact that the AP's aims were derived from the report's findings. For example when the level of student achievements in a specific subject area was not good and the teaching of that

subject clearly needed reinforcement, the first step would be an appropriate statement in the action plan.

It became clear, given that one of the main challenges for the head teacher was to enhance teachers' involvement and responsibility, that all teachers were partners in designing the action plan. Firstly, each grade coordinator defined the aims together with the set of teachers for her grade referring to all sources that were mentioned above. Secondly, all the teachers were re-grouped according to subject and discussed each subject (maths, language etc.) in terms of the whole school. They did this in small groups led by the relevant coordinator. The plan was presented to everybody, and each teacher got a copy of it to work with. Consequently, it was not surprising that teachers knew the school's priorities and agreed upon them.

The follow-up of the AP's implementation consisted of the school's internal exams and by class observations of individual classes undertaken by the head teacher. She always made a point of establishing the way in which the observed lesson was connected to the action plan.

Impact of the report

Generally, teachers felt that the report, being an external source of information, highlighted their work from different, fresh point of view, provided an opportunity to promote efficiency at their work, enhanced their shared responsibility and helped them to set priorities as well as further monitor their work and their students' achievements. *It was a lever for growth*, they said.

On the whole, the findings of the report affected the school's curriculum and impelled the teachers towards more 'whole school' work. It was perceived as the concern of all the teachers. As one of the SMT members said:

Older students are being examined but there are conclusions that we apply starting from the young age. If we do so the results will improve.

3rd report – 2003

A summary of the report's findings

In this report it appeared that more students agreed that their relationships with their teachers are good, whereas fewer teachers had high expectations of their students. Many more students were positive about the framework regarding discipline which now had a clear direction. Fewer teachers gave positive responses with regard to their professional development and the school as a working place.

Dissemination of the report

Only nuances of the dissemination procedure had changed. The first ones to read the report were the same group as before; the head teacher and the SMT. Teachers at the staff meeting got a new, more detailed, paper to work with. It contained, again, a general description of Meytzav, its aims, and the different parts of the report. But it also included the head teacher's summary of the report. Most of the information in the paper was not a full description. Teachers were asked to consider it generally with the same questions that had appeared in the previous paper. The head teacher highlighted certain findings. For example:

The report says that 80% of the students expressed satisfaction with the school and she added: (what about the other 20% – these are 120 students!).

While not highlighting the parent–teacher relationships, she wrote *it needs to be improved*. Other findings were written in a very short version:

– Teachers' expectations are below the national average,

– There are many discipline problems – 50% – average.

and so on.

The staff's reactions

Results of the evaluation of the school culture in the report, one of the main concerns of the previous report, had improved. Consequently, satisfaction was expressed by the staff.

The head teacher suggested explanations for teachers' low expectations of their students, which was reflected in the report: *it might be related to a specific subject, she claimed, or the teachers' misunderstanding of the question they had been asked. Nonetheless, the fact that teachers were trying to improve and did not give up proved that they had high expectations from their students.*

How was the new knowledge used?

Because part of the action plan was the outcome of the findings of the report, the implementation procedures concerning the action plan are relevant to the implementation of those findings. Procedures that had been developed in previous years aiming at the improvement of the AP were also applied this year. As well as previously used follow-up techniques, coordinators and teachers used lesson modelling to provide an opportunity for discussion and learning. *It requires openness and feeling secure* claimed the head teacher and the first ones to model were the coordinators and the head teacher.

The head teacher felt that all teachers were much more involved at that stage, and that the school's improvement was no longer the concern of the class tutors solely, but that every teacher at the school took part in designing the action plan for the school and was involved in different implementation procedures.

Now teachers feel shared responsibility of difficulties that arise as well as of successes.

The impact of the report

The head teacher claimed that the first subjects that were dealt with were those that the report found to be weak. Nevertheless, the school did not rely only on the report's findings but used other sources (for example, the local authority initiated an annual exam to take place in all the schools) and this, the head teacher believed, improved

their work. She hoped to build on this and turn the Meytzav report into one tool of many. In the past the external report had been the main resource for planning. Recently, other resources had served the school in terms of its intention of designing its action plan, among them a new Language National Curriculum, which was designed by language experts, internal exams and the local exams as well as the specific needs of the school. She perceived it as more appropriate,

.....because there are not two identical schools so the plan can not only rely on external sources it has to take into consideration the specific needs of the school, the number of students in it and other contextual parameters.

Changes over time

The following table presents a summary of key elements of the three reports (2001–2003), showing the changes in teachers' and students' accounts. However, because it does not necessarily reflect the accounts of the same population it is not indicative for itself it rather implies on the change over time.

Table no. 4: – Changes over time, key elements of Meytzav reports

The topics of the report	Percentages of positive answers – 1 st report	Percentages of positive answers – 2 nd report	Percentages of positive answers – 3 rd report
The characteristics of the school's pedagogical culture			
Students believed that their teachers were taking into consideration the differences between students	27 %	28%	18%
Students thought that their teachers used a variety of teaching methods	53%	60%	60%
Students thought that feedback was fair and effective	55%	55%	No data
Teachers wrote that they used traditional assessment techniques	53%	18%	20%
Teachers wrote that there was a clear policy for assessment of students	77%	86%	85%
The school culture			
Students wrote that they had good relationships with teachers	62%	65%	80%
Students wrote that, regarding discipline, there was clear direction within a clear framework	30%	40%	82%
Students' achievements and teachers' expectations			
Teachers had high expectations of the students.	77%	60%	55%

The topics of the report	Percentages of positive answers – 1 st report	Percentages of positive answers – 2 nd report	Percentages of positive answers – 3 rd report
Professional development and the school as a working place			
Teachers learning Maths	50%	3%	40%
Teachers learning Hebrew	92%	30%	60%
Teachers learning Science	100%	0%	1%
Teachers learning English	0%	30%	0%
Teachers perceived the head teacher as a pedagogical authority	100%	87%	80%
Teachers' felt that they were being consulted in the decision-making process	88%	68%	No data
Teachers perceived the parents as partners in the educational process	78%	63%	60%
Teachers perceived themselves as having a high level, professionally speaking	93%	95%	85%
Teachers felt that they had autonomy	100%	100%	100%
Teachers felt motivated	100%	93%	80%
Teachers felt that they had good professional relationship	100%	88%	80%
Teachers felt burdened and worn out	23%	22%	20%

The three reports indicated that fewer teachers were positive in most aspects of the school covered by the reports through the years, mainly aspects that related to teachers' perceptions of themselves and of their students: their expectations of the students, perceiving the head teacher as a pedagogical authority, perceiving themselves as having a high level and good professional relationships as well as having a part in decision-making processes, and perceiving the parents as partners in the educational process. It is possible that these findings affected their motivation, to which fewer teachers were positive too. On the other hand students reported an improvement in student–teacher relationships, in the variety of teaching methods that their teachers used and regarding discipline in there being a clear direction within a clear framework. This latter area had apparently improved to a huge extent.

The dissemination procedures

Throughout the years there were only slight changes in the dissemination procedures. On receipt of the first report, the head teacher first shared the findings with the SMT, and they discussed its implications for the work of the school. When the students' achievements were presented to all the staff, efforts were made not to make this the concern of a specific class, but to keep it the concern of all. All teachers were invited to offer their ideas concerning how to bring about improvements.

With the receipt of the second report, the same path was taken: from the head teacher to the SMT and then, much later, a summary was put on overheads and presented to the teachers. Teachers had the opportunity to share the information in the report, not only the students' achievement (as had been done previously), but they did not have the opportunity to analyse it. In a staff meeting where they discussed the report point by point according to a series of points drawn up in a paper by the head teacher, it was mainly the head teacher's suggestions as to how to improve that were reflected in the conclusions of this discussion.

The only change which was implemented on receipt of the third report was the paper that the head teacher designed and distributed to the teachers. This time teachers got a very brief summary of the report on that paper, and this was accompanied by request to consider the same points that had been included in it previously.

The staff's reactions

Teachers' reactions to the first report were of disappointment and criticism. They claimed that it was anecdotal, and detached from the reality of the school. The head teacher believed that the whole procedure of the external evaluation, including its report, was threatening for the teachers.

On receipt of the second report, whereas teachers still criticized it as being detached from the reality of the school, their reactions on a whole became more complex. Some of them saw the report as being the concern of all, and claimed that, for them, their students' achievements reflected their own achievements. Although they perceived the report as a tool for external purposes, they could also reflect on it as being comprehensive, objective, user-friendly, and facilitating the process of identifying what needed to be improved. Thus they thought it was a good source for learning. The head teacher insisted on not relating the findings to a specific teacher but rather to present them as the concern of all.

The receipt of the third report was marked by staff satisfaction at the improvement in the evaluation of the school's culture reflected in it. At the same time the head teacher pointed to the fact that because the report was external, she would rather see it as one resource among many in the planning of the school's work.

The use of the findings

The implementation procedures gained sophistication through the years. At first the main focus was only the low level of student achievement which was tackled in various ways. Subsequent to the second report, more procedures were applied: processes of self-evaluation, enhanced monitoring of students' achievements, including allocation of resources, and refreshing the procedure of writing the action plan while referring to the report as one source of it. The previous year's action plan was the starting point for the succeeding one.

The next year a further step was taken: the staff had started to use modelling of lessons, and the discussions this sparked, as one technique for improvement. More teachers became involved in the implementation of the action plan, which partly relied on the report's findings.

The impact of the reports

The impact of the first report was very limited. However, it changed on receipt of the second report, which was perceived as having more impact because it brought another point of view into the life of the school. It was perceived as promoting efficiency, enhancing responsibility, making the work a 'whole school' matter and helping to set priorities.

It seems that when the third report was received at school, the staff was more mature and the report was received in a more balanced way: it became the first resource among many which were felt to have the potential to improve the school's work.

The site of the research: School S

History and physical description

School S was the first secular school in a small town in the southern part of Israel. The city was one of the established in the 1950s when there was an influx of immigrants, mainly from Arab countries, who had to be settled very quickly. The government at the time decided to send them to remote areas as part of their aim to spread the Jewish population around the country. The school was established in 1956. Ten years ago the original building was demolished and a new one built.

There were 418 students and 27 teachers in 14 classes. These numbers were stable as there was no further influx of immigrants. Students who started at the school usually finished there. The students came from contrasting backgrounds; some of them were from an average socio-economic background, others from a low one.²⁸ All students lived within walking distance of the school.

The school's architecture was similar to that of other schools in the country built in the last 10–15 years. It was comprised of three modern buildings: one single-storey that includes the offices, the staff room, and the library, another building for the younger group of children aged 6–8 and a third for the older students, aged 9–12. There were two wide courtyards. The place was well kept and tidy, which made it welcoming and comfortable. The walls were covered with patriotic statements as well as learning materials.

The staff room and the head teacher's room were small. In the staff room there was a computer, a cupboard to include some teaching material and a coffee–tea corner. There were comfortable armchairs.

²⁸ The school fostering index is 6 out of 10, which is a bit lower than the average. 'Fostering index' is the Israeli term to define the average socio-economic level of the families at the school. 10 being the lowest category. It influences the school's budget.

First impressions

My impression of a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere at the school was borne out in some incidents that I witnessed, involving the head teacher, the teachers and the students.

When I asked to interview the head teacher, she agreed although it was the last month of the academic year, a time of stress for all schools. I also witnessed her response to an accident in the school. Other staff members took care of the injured student, and called her mother but when the mother entered the head teacher's room, the head teacher dealt with her in a self-assured manner, with no aggression or blame felt on either side. The impression was of an efficient social machine where everyone knows her role and mutual respect is apparent.

Parents were perceived by the staff as an important part of the school community. Apparently, the relationship between them and the staff has been fraught with difficulty in the past, but recently, it has improved significantly:

....in the past, said the head teacher, the communication with the parents was not good.... two years ago they made a riot, they refused to pay. But then a new chair was appointed by them. He persuaded them to pay and from then on we have very good relationships...every school would wish to have a parents committee (representative) as we have.

At the several staff meetings I attended, a calm and encouraging atmosphere was evident. Teachers acted in a relaxed and responsive way when they filled in the questionnaires as well as when they were interviewed which reflected the general culture of the school. I also observed them being attentive and respectful to an instructor who regularly worked with them. In the interviews with me they described the school as a place to hear and to be heard, a place where they felt respected and valued, and for which they shared responsibility. It would appear that their positive feelings were also connected to the good relations with students and their parents:

The connections with parents are very important. (They) influence the child...

Teachers knew all students by names; they knew their families and their backgrounds.

However, a different situation was suggested by the findings of the research questionnaire. Although it is important to bear in mind that only 11 teachers out of 27 answered the questionnaires, their feelings of togetherness, of being supported by colleagues, and of a favourable atmosphere at the school were not high.

In the playground, the students were mostly calm, and played in an orderly manner. When, one of the teachers' interviews had to be conducted in a class during a lesson, even though it was a class of young students (age 6) they were engaged and carried on with their tasks.

The staff

The head teacher

Two different head teachers took part in the research and both of them had been members of the school staff for many years before they were appointed as head teachers.

The first head teacher, who left after the first year of the research, had taught in the school for 17 years. She started as an English teacher and then became the head for eight years. At the same time that she took over the old school building was demolished. It was an opportunity for her to open the school to '*all new ideas*' and she strove to make it a leading school, '*like it used to be*'. It was the first school in town to apply self-management.

After she left the deputy head, Sue, was appointed. Sue has a degree in psychology and had been a part of the school's staff for 6 years (previously, for 15 years she had worked in another school in the same town, where she was a teacher and a deputy head). She came to School S as a teacher but a year after her arrival she became deputy head. Throughout our meetings she was very cooperative she was willing to share. She expressed her appreciation for science and for research while mentioning her own degrees.

She also had high expectations: *I want everybody who reads the report to see high performances, and saw the key for success in the student – teacher interaction (which) will determine the quality of education.* This might be reflected in her involvement with the teachers as well as with the students, all of whom she knew by their names. She believed in students' and teachers' ability to succeed, and claimed that

An educational system has to strive for excellence.

A school has to be the most innovative and advanced, but (in general) schools are not open to new ideas and are not innovative.

She believed she shared the decision-making with the teachers. She set clear boundaries but at the same time wanted to give teachers a feeling that she was one of them; she wanted to listen to them and be open to their ideas. An example of her openness might be the following: she planned to change the role of the SMT and other role distribution in the school. With the aim of enhancing the responsibility and involvement of the staff, she offered the teachers the opportunity to come up with ideas for roles which might promote the school's aims; she promised to consider any suggestion. The person suggesting the change would then be responsible for seeing it through. The SMT would be comprised of all role holders and decisions would be made in whole-staff meetings, which were held every fortnight. At the time of the research not many teachers had come up with suggestions for change, a fact that put her initiative into question. She said: *if I do not get offers, I will decide.*

She described herself as a colleague as well as a mentor. Monitoring teachers' work, the implementation of the curriculum, and students' achievements, and offering her help in case of difficulty was all perceived by her as a part of her role.

The SMT and the teachers

Of the twenty seven teachers, twenty six were female and one male. He had been a student at the school. In the past most of the teachers had come from nearby agriculture settlements in response to a government policy offering incentives to encourage people to teach in these places. This meant that their backgrounds were

different from their students. But in the last ten years, the experienced teachers have left, and the staff has become stable with most living in the same town as the student although some still come from the nearby settlements.

The SMT was comprised of four coordinators: one for the 1st–3rd grade, the other one for the 4th–6th grade, and two for maths and language. The role of the language and maths coordinators seemed to be significant. Both of them were instructors and were professionally valued by the head teacher and by the staff. They were responsible for monitoring students' progress with class teachers every fortnight, and initiating INSET for teachers equally frequently. However, the teachers did not feel that the topics chosen for the INSET were pertinent to their needs. For example, some teachers claimed that the courses they took enlarged their personal knowledge to a much higher extent than their practical knowledge. Teachers were studying outside the school as well. A large number of them studied maths once a week. The school was obliged to send the teachers to that course as part of a national initiative to improve students' achievements in maths.

Students' and adults' learning was valued at the school: *teachers' learning is a norm, it is a part of a teacher's job*, said one of the teachers. This perception was enhanced by the head teacher's perception of teachers' learning. She emphasized that there were professional development processes that regularly took place at the school.

While most of the teachers claimed that they did not feel that they had influence on decision-making and their awareness of school priorities was limited, they described a very thorough procedure for redefining the curriculum, which was the concern of all the teachers. They felt that they had opportunities to share their new knowledge, as well as had opportunities to clarify their attitudes, beliefs and values. Teachers felt professionally backed up. They said:

When we don't succeed in teaching the material to the date or a student has difficulties, we can consult the head teacher. Usually she is willing to help.

We are like an ants' nest, said the head teacher, *when there was a class with a problem, all resources were directed to this class.*

Both, the teachers and the head teacher described the head teacher as being attentive to students' and to teachers' needs and flexible when a change in providing the resources was needed. Whenever an obstacle emerged, they focused human and time resources on it. Consequently, in all cases, a real improvement occurred. For example: in order to make it possible to work in small groups and improve, extra teachers were designated to teach a specific subject to the same class, a retired teacher came to help, and a mother helped with reading problems. In other cases extra hours were dedicated to teaching a subject and it influenced students' achievements. When the extra help of a special needs teacher was required usually the head teacher found the way to present it to the student. Teachers said:

Cooperation is an integral part of our life. We all work in cooperation.

External support

Most professional instruction was done by teachers in the school who were appropriately qualified. A curriculum instructor, who had helped the school in the last three years to define their school's curriculum and the action plan, provided an external support which was highly appreciated by the teachers. The school inspector was also mentioned as a professional promoter. She visited the school frequently and instructed the teachers, but she worked mainly with the head teacher.

The reports

1st report 2001²⁹

A summary of the report's findings

Generally, about half of the students who answered the external evaluation questionnaire agreed upon positive culture indicators at the school, such as: good relationships with their teachers, a fair and effective feedback of their teachers and teachers using a variety of teaching methods. Fewer students believed that their teachers are taking into consideration their diversity and that there was a clear

²⁹ In the case of school S the account of the first report was of the first head teacher who had left the school at the end of the same year. Once the second head teacher was already in post, two more reports were received at the school. Thus, when the head teacher is mentioned in reference to the 2nd and 3rd report, it is the new head teacher who is intended.

direction within a clear framework of discipline. Although being not high, student achievements were reported as being reasonable in comparison with similar schools. All the teachers who answered the phone interviews perceived their head teacher as a pedagogical authority, around 80% of them perceived the parents as partners and perceived themselves as having a high professional level, but more than 30% agreed that they were worn out.

The dissemination of the report

Only the four teachers whose classes were examined that year were given the report to read at home. The fourteen parents who comprised the central committee of parents got a photocopy of parts of the report, mainly the parts dealing with the school's culture. The head teacher said:

I didn't want them to see (information concerning) students' achievements as they would be able to identify the teacher of particular classes. But they were satisfied that we shared some of the information with them.

The staff's reactions

The head teacher felt she responded very differently from the teachers to the first report. She thought that the teachers were shocked, while she herself welcomed the report and perceived it as an opportunity to work with the teachers and the parents to develop an action plan. She thought it was a good, reflective tool that would promote teachers' ability to analyse processes in school. She used the report as *a lever for growth*. In the report the school was compared with the national average, and finding her school coming out higher than expected gave her a good feeling. But at the same time she did not see the report as '*a torah from Sinai*', but as a set of points acting as suggestions for improvement.

Most of the information in the report did not surprise her. In her view the staff should not have been surprised by the report, because *a person has to recognize his/her reality*.

She believed that regarding students who had not understood a concept or a question in the questionnaire, '*the staff (had) to teach them before the next evaluation (took)*

place'. She spoke about other schools where students are being prepared for the exams while she believed it was wrong.

As most of the teachers did not have the opportunity to see the report, so it was impossible to get their reactions towards it.

How was the new knowledge used?

Previously the head teacher had been in charge of the action plan, but as part of the new procedure new steps were taken but the head teacher had reservations about her staff:

We had to define an action plan, I always did it with the school's inspector, so I wasn't afraid of that but the staff was. The demands were difficult for them: to define aims, to keep their teaching in a frame...

She had to present the plan to external agencies. This fact, she felt, upgraded the status of the action plan but it had to become more clear and straightforward, and she had to share its development with the teachers. She felt that while this promoted discussion and thinking among teachers, they still did not believe that they were capable of producing the plan. Consequently the process was done step by step. The teachers had been asked to map the students' achievements, the educational climate in the class and the learning and work culture; then having read the report, the teachers whose classes had been examined compared the maps and the report together with the head teacher and drew conclusions as to what needed including in the action plan for the following year.

The impact of the report

To an extent the change of the procedure of developing the school's action plan was partly due to the external evaluation procedure and its report. The content of the new action plan was influenced by the report's findings in the four relevant classes.

2nd report 2002

A summary of the report's findings

When the second report arrived at the school, Sue was already in her post as a head teacher. Much more positive reactions of the students to the various aspects of the report were recorded, especially regarding discipline, where 75% of them agreed that there was clear direction within a clear framework. Teachers' positive reactions had grown as well. On the other hand student achievements in this report had generally deteriorated.

The dissemination of the report

The dissemination process started with a discussion that the head teacher held with the SMT with regard to the findings, and then it was presented to the whole staff in a general meeting.

Teachers mainly discussed the parts of the report that dealt with students' achievements in "*the important*" subjects, the parts dealing with the school as a work place and the part concerned with the school climate. The discussion of the findings included suggesting possible reasons for them: checking whether the themes that appeared in the exams had been taught, whether or not enough hours had been dedicated to the specific theme, whether or not adequate teaching strategies had been applied.

The staff's reactions

A teacher described the emotional responses of teachers on their discovery that the report assessed their work (relying on their students' achievements) as being at a low level:

They were surprised and disappointed. It was only later that they could pay more attention to what needed to be done. An interesting fact is that teachers didn't blame each other. The opposite is true: we checked what needed to be done, where we had gone wrong. It became the whole school's concern.

Another teacher added: *We do not blame each other; it's the responsibility of us all. It is as if we have been examined.* The feelings were referred to as the concern of all teachers: *If the results are good it's our pride....it's the concern of us all because it represents our school.*

Sue claimed that teachers had not understood that they carried a certain responsibility to the reports' findings, because *the previous head teacher never explained the meaning of Meytzav to the teachers...*

Consequently, she involved them to a higher extent in the external evaluation procedure:

When they saw the findings they were shocked. Previously they hadn't understood their responsibility for it. Now they know that they are responsible for the low achievements. Consequently, next time, the relation to the external evaluation procedure will be more serious.

She claimed that the report gave another dimension to what was done in the school.

The report was clear and accessible for the head teacher but not for all the teachers. Some of them thought that although the findings were clearly presented, the way in which they were presented did not make them usable.

Most of the teachers saw the report as an accurate representation of what they were experiencing in the school. They related to it but saw their role as resolving contradictions between its findings and what they knew as the reality of the situation at the school.

However, some teachers perceived the findings as relevant for the school's needs. They considered it important to use the report as a way to improve. A teacher commented:

...it was important because we are a part of the Israeli society and it is important to know our place in comparison to other schools in the country.

However, they were still critical of the evaluation procedure. They saw it as an external tool which aimed to control, to check the school and the educational system in the town, through comparing the schools in terms of student performance. Teachers commented on technical deficiencies in the process. They claimed that it was not clear enough, and that some of the statements in the students' questionnaire were misleading. They felt that being interviewed by telephone indicated a lack of respect for teachers' opinions, and that, consequently, they did not always take these interviews seriously.

The arrival of the report to the school triggered the teachers' reactions to the external evaluation procedure in general. They felt that the communication between the Department of Evaluation and the school was superficial, and that this made the system, incorporating teachers and students, anxious. This led to students being examined on themes that they had not learnt, and sometimes hours having to be dedicated to a specific theme for no evident reason.

I hope it aims to help us to know the student's problem and promote him rather than aiming to 'catch' the teacher, said one of the teachers. (This comment reflects a feeling of 'them' and 'us'), another teacher added:

There is no one to discuss the results with, no flexibility: the system drives on with its own rationale no matter what the special characteristics of a specific class might be.

The way it is presented to us is not constructive. Representatives from the Ministry of Education should have come to discuss the results with the SMT. Because of the way it is done, many teachers can ignore it, or explain away the low achievements in terms of the circumstances rather than acknowledging them as relating to themselves.

So, the attitude that underpinned the procedure was not individual:

The external procedure does not take into consideration the person behind the exam: if a weak student made progress we might see it as a big success, but s/he might fail the external exam.

One teacher claimed that this type of the external report is inadequate vis-à-vis the reality of schooling:

Teaching is a process, a school is a dynamic place; the external evaluation is not. It checks in at a certain point in time and doesn't consider processes.

How was the new knowledge used?

The detailed work of trying to find ways to improve was done in smaller forums, within the context of specific subject areas. Plans were prepared with reference to the subjects that needed improvement. Yet there were still a considerable number of teachers who felt that they had not taken part in consultations with regard to the external report.

They focused more closely on the external evaluation itself. The head teacher showed the questionnaire used in the telephone interview to the teachers so that they knew what they were going to be asked about. Students were taught concepts that appeared in the questionnaire, *otherwise their answers will not be credible*, said one of the teachers.

The implementation procedures included enhanced monitoring of the students' achievements and the teachers' work and a new procedure for developing the action plan.

Teachers' work and students' achievements

The findings of students' achievements as being at low level were tackled in several ways. The head teacher worked with teachers on their teaching strategies. And together they learnt ways to develop an optimum lesson; parts of which would be dedicated to individual students and to small group teaching. Extra hours were given

language and maths. Every fortnight a short exam was conducted in maths and language with reference to a specific topic that had been taught during that period. The coordinators discussed the results with the teachers.

But the head teacher emphasised:

Things would have been done anyway: it is not that the plan is changed due to Meytzav, rather that the teaching strategies and the points that we relate to are changed.

On the school level, an enhanced monitoring of several aspects of the curriculum, including teachers' work and students' performance was carried out. For example, each teacher had to write down her work plan for the following year. The head teacher and the teacher/group of teachers of the same grade monitored its implementation almost every month or two. "Head teacher's exams" were designed by the coordinator of the relevant subject area. Some classes had these exams twice a year, others three times. All teachers of the same grade checked the exams together in order to prevent bias and a class profile was created. These profiles were the basis for a twice yearly discussion with the head teacher of the school's action plan; what had been done, what had happened to the students and why and what there was still to do in order to fulfil the action plan's aims. This was the opportunity to allocate resources if needed. For example, when a problem was identified in a specific subject area in one of the classes, all resources were directed to this class. It was called a 'marathon' and amounted to an extended emphasis on a specific area. At the beginning and at the end of this procedure the students were tested.

It is important to indicate here that the science and the English, which were the other two subject areas to be examined, were handled differently. The head teacher explained that the science exam results were not a surprise, and that they knew the reason for the low achievements, so she did not think that she had to change anything. In the case of English they were short on human resources, and could not handle it in the same way.

The action plan

The process of developing an action plan already existed in the school, but not solely as a consequence of the *Meytzav* report. However, the external evaluation procedure and its findings had influenced the process:

We conduct a feedback as a result of Meytzav and subsequently develop the action plan. The report's findings formed part of the data that served as the foundation for our action plan.

Although external examinations are not a part of the young students' classes, the plan concerning these is influenced by the findings.

The head teacher initiated a new procedure in which the teachers develop the action plan. She saw her role as to collect the plans from them, summarize them and welding them into a common document.

Each grade teacher was responsible for reflecting on her/his own teaching, drawing conclusions and writing a part in the action plan. Teachers were particularly satisfied with that approach. They did not take part in defining the school's priorities but to an extent, they took part in developing the action plan. It had always been the concern of all teachers, but at that stage teachers felt that it was an improved process:

The head teacher asked us to write a more detailed plan. We added our recommendations for actions for each month, relying on actions that we practiced and worked. It is more focused and next year it will save teachers' time.

The impact of the report

It appeared that in the school the impact of the report could be mainly seen in two areas: the school curriculum and the teachers' work, including their perceptions of their roles.

The school curriculum

While claiming:

I am not teaching for the exam: it's not right to do so. They keep teaching as usual and even if there is a problem in a certain subject, I will not change the curriculum because of the exam,

The head teacher herself said that changes were made in the emphasis that was given to various subjects in the curriculum, and in resource allocation: *students' achievements in language were horrendous, so extra emphasis was put on it.*

However, the teachers' claimed that the themes of the external exam were already on the net, so they had known in advance what they had to teach. Consequently the teacher who was appointed to teach the subjects covered in the exam would be the one who could best prepare the students for it. Moreover, they used examples from previous years' exams in order to train the students within a similar frame. More emphasis was put on themes that they knew that would appear in the exam and they abandoned themes that would not be there. For example although they thought that social matters were not less important, they reduced the hours to deal with social matters, in order to make more time to teach other subjects.

Teachers' work

The head teacher was very clear about using the report as a tool to promote her own educational perceptions for enhancing teachers' professionalism. She said:

It is important for me that the report will not be a whip in my hand; I would rather use it as a catalyst. The report makes it clear to the teachers that they are responsible for students' achievements, it promotes accountability, and they cannot blame the student for his\her failures...

She added:

Subsequent to receiving the report I send teachers to study professional courses. The report backs up my demand for their enhanced professionalism.

With the aim of improving teachers' professionalism, they were sent to take courses outside the school. Moreover some teachers perceived the report's impact on their work as having promoted professionalism, enhanced responsibility and motivated teachers to undertake further study.

Discussing the report's findings gave the teachers an opportunity to reflect. It promoted their inquiry skills – teachers were more able to delve into processes at school – and it focused their work. A teacher expressed her reservation:

It focuses our work but does not necessarily improve it.

Teachers' enhanced co-operation and the sense of having more influence on decision-making at the school might be the result of perceiving the report findings as their mutual responsibility.

3rd report – 2003

A summary of the report's findings

Generally, student achievements, especially in maths, were still low. In language there was a slight improvement, however in maths there were less failures. Most of the other indicators of the report gained fewer positive reactions than previously.

The dissemination of the report

The dissemination of the third report was not different than that of the previous one. After receiving the report the head teacher presented it to the SMT members. They discussed the findings and subsequently presented it to the whole staff for discussion in a general meeting.

The staff's reactions

Although this was the second report that the head teacher received while she was in her post, it was the first report in which the data had been collected while she was in post. She was baffled:

For a long time now I have been trying to understand what the reasons for the students' low level of achievements are. We invest time for staff learning, extending hours for students' learning, we define new programs, our internal instructors are considered as professionals and still the achievements are not high enough.

but she did feel it gave some indication of students' improvement:

There is an improvement in the test results in language; however, in maths the situation is different. The average has not been improved a lot, but compared to the previous report, there are fewer failing students. We will draw conclusions for the next year.

She did not perceive the external evaluation as threatening; rather she saw it as a tool for improvement and believed that it was the trigger for a self-evaluation process which she initiated at the school. She said:

I want to use the external report as a trigger, an external criterion which gives me an idea of my place within the overall system

Others at the school concurred with this view. They saw the external report as drawing the line, the norm, to which they had to strive, and said it made clearer as to what their aims should be. The report sections reflected the component parts of the schooling process and apparently that was the reason that it was perceived as corresponding precisely with the school's needs.

How was the new knowledge used?

The low level of students' performance which was identified in the external report was tackled mainly in two ways: adding an individual dimension to the teachers' role and trying to create cohesive policies.

Teachers' role

The process of rethinking the teachers' role was mainly influenced by the head teacher's educational philosophy. She believed that effective learning started when each student felt that s/he was cared about. Therefore she asked every teacher to designate one hour a week for an informal conversation with individual students. She planned in the following year to improve teaching skills by employing a school-based course in which the topic of teacher–student interactions would be studied.

Developing cohesive policies

The school's curriculum – The work of changing the school curriculum, which had been done previously, triggered the sharing of teachers' ideas and values. During that particular year the school's curriculum became clearer and more transparent: it appeared on the internet, and each group of teachers of the same grade had to contribute one developed topic to the internet version.

The school's self-evaluation – The culture of self-evaluation at the school gained further emphasis that year. All INSET time was dedicated to a process of developing school self-evaluation. An external instructor was invited to the whole-staff meetings to teach relevant theories and measures of evaluation and assessment. A committee was appointed to deal further with the school self-evaluation.

The aim of the self-evaluation was to try and work out the reasons for the low level of students' performance in the external report, as one of the teachers said: *we have a great staff; we have everything but no achievements*. The staff had decided to evaluate the methods of implementation in the school.

A whole process of self-evaluation was conducted: teachers were asked about how they perceived their commitment, and subsequently a teachers' questionnaire was

designed and answered. Following the analysis of its findings a school standards document was produced by the teachers.

It was not easy, said the head teacher, and indeed it was a chaotic process, but for me it was great because since that time we have been able to define an ethical code for teachers and every new teacher will know exactly what is needed to be done and who is responsible for what.

Moreover, the whole staff learnt alternative evaluation techniques which they have started to implement. The evaluation objects they chose were: 'the quality of teacher-student meetings' and 'the quality of a lesson'.

The school's standards, which were the product of the thorough self-evaluation procedure, and whose definition was a joint achievement by all the teachers, would be the foundations of the next action plan.

The impact of the report

It is possible to summarize the report's impact in the following areas: school self-evaluation, teaching strategies, monitoring of students' performance and of teachers' work, teachers' responsibility and accountability.

The head teacher felt that the report promoted discussion among teachers, and a dialogue about external and internal procedures was created. Both the teachers and the head teacher saw the external evaluation procedure as a trigger for the internal procedures: *When you open things and speak about this something happens to you. This process was a consequence of the external report*, said one of the teachers. The head teacher indicated: *Institutionalisation of the internal evaluation sets up the internal standards to confront the external ones and a constructive dialogue can emerge*. This was actually her reason for putting an emphasis on developing this aspect at the school. She also declared that: *Evaluation can promote schooling and be a lever for the school's work*.

Although it was only the beginning of a process (the internal evaluation), they could already see that though it was not easy, teachers preferred to be open about things: *We have learnt that we can speak about anything*, said a teacher.

The head teacher was satisfied that self-evaluation had achieved its aims of devising the school's standards and writing an ethical code for the teacher's work.

Consequently, the level of teachers' responsibility and accountability were enhanced; they better understood the connections between their work and the report's findings. Twice a year they had to report to the head teacher, submitting the profile of each student's achievements in three main subjects. Obviously this obliged them to carry out a systematic process of monitoring students. Their tools for evaluation and assessment had improved, and they used a variety of measures. These meetings with the head teacher served to report on students' progress as well as to monitor teachers' work. They had to try and explain each student's improvement/deterioration; in problematic cases a detailed individual plan had to be designed.

Changes over time

The following table presents a summary of key elements of the three reports (2001–2003), showing the changes in teachers' and students' accounts. However, because it does not necessarily reflect the accounts of the same population it is not indicative for itself it rather implies on the change over time.

Table no. 5: Changes over time, key elements of Meytzav reports

The topics of the report	Percentages of positive answers – 1 st report	Percentages of positive answers – 2 nd report	Percentages of positive answers – 3 rd report
The characteristics of the school's pedagogical culture			
Students believe that their teachers are taking into consideration the differences between students	34 %	30%	18%
Students think that their teachers use a variety of teaching methods	55%	72%	58%
Students think that feedback is fair and effective	55%	68%	53%
Teachers agreed that they use traditional assessment techniques	19%	20%	0%
Teachers approved that there is a clear policy for assessment of students	60%	70%	70%

The topics of the report	Percentages of positive answers – 1 st report	Percentages of positive answers – 2 nd report	Percentages of positive answers – 3 rd report
The school culture			
Students agreed that they have good relationships with teachers	66%	75%	70%
Students approved that, regarding discipline, there is clear direction within a clear framework	30%	75%	87%
Students' achievements and teachers' expectations			
Teachers have high expectations of the students	75%	85%	No data
Professional development and the school as a working place			
Teachers are attending maths courses	35%	50%	60%
Teachers are attending Hebrew courses	60%	40%	60%
Teachers are attending science courses	0%	50%	0%
Teachers are attending English courses	0%	0%	0%
Teachers perceive the head teacher as a pedagogical authority	100%	100%	No data
Teachers' feel that they are being consulted in the decision-making process	88%	100%	87%
Teachers perceive the parents as partners in the educational process	82%	80%	75%
Teachers seeing themselves as highly professional	82%	100%	73%
Teachers feel that they have autonomy	93%	100%	100%
Teachers feel motivated	87%	100%	78%
Teachers feel that they have good professional relationship	82%	90%	68%
Teachers feel burdened and worn out	35%	30%	40%

It is clear that, within the framework of the school culture, only the indicator of 'students wrote that regarding discipline there was clear direction within a clear framework' received an increased percentage of positive answers from one year to the next. A comparison of the second report to the first reveals that an increased percentage of students appeared to answer positively to most of the indicators, regarding the school culture; thereafter, the percentages deteriorated.

However, it is interesting to indicate that although Sue spoke about a much more individual approach to students, the three indicators which are related to it – using a variety of teaching methods, relating to students' diversity, and giving them a fair feedback – had deteriorated (fewer students answered them positively in the third report). The percentage of teachers who thought that there was a clear assessment policy had not changed, and was still not high.

Sue's claim that she did not have a reliable person to teach English is reflected in the fact that none of the teachers studied English during those three years.

As for the school as a working place and the procedures of professional development, the only indicator which gained a higher percentage of positive answers was teachers feeling autonomy in their classes. As with the indicators that relate to the school's culture, in all other indicators regarding the school as a working place there was a higher percentage of teachers that answered positively between the first and the second report, while this number deteriorated in the third report.

The indicators that might cause special concern are: teachers' motivation (and their feeling of being worn out), their professional relationships, and their perception of themselves as having a high professional level.

The dissemination procedures

From being the concern solely of the head teacher and the teachers who taught in the examined classes, the report became the concern of most of the staff members. Having read the second and the third reports, the head teacher discussed them with the SMT and they were presented to the whole staff for discussion. Nevertheless not all the teachers felt that they were truly participating in those discussions.

The staff's reactions

While the first report was mainly the concern of the head teacher, she saw it as a good tool, a lever for growth, one tool of many. Although teachers had almost no chance to read the report, the head teacher thought they were shocked by it.

When teachers saw the second report they were surprised and disappointed mainly due to the low level of achievements of students. The head teacher tried to justify the students' level of achievement by the fact that teachers had not had the opportunity to understand their responsibility when data was collected for the report; she was sure that the situation would improve next time round. Despite their disappointment, the teachers perceived the report as a possible tool for improvement and tried to work together in checking what needed to be done. At the same time they did not spare their criticism of it. They perceived it with suspicion: they questioned whether it was a tool for external control; they felt that the way the data was collected did not respect their work, and they questioned its professionalism.

The fact that the third report demonstrated again that the level of students achievements was low puzzled the head teacher. But teachers were no longer threatened by the report or shocked by it; they perceived it as a norm in relation to which they would have to strive, and they thought it relevant for their school's needs.

The use of the findings

In the past, the school's AP had been the concern of the head teacher alone. Receiving the first report, more teachers became involved in the AP development, mainly those teachers whose classes were examined that year.

A much more developed implementation process took place in subsequent years. Although the report was still only a part of the data that served as a foundation for the action plan, all the teachers were involved in developing it. They relied on their practical experience. They also tried to improve students' achievements by applying new teaching strategies, dedicating extra hours to certain subject matters, and extending and enhancing the monitoring of teachers' work and students' performances. They prepared themselves for the next external evaluation procedure by studying the questions of the telephone interviews and teaching the students new concepts that would appear in the exams.

Receiving the findings of the third report urged the head teacher to seek tools for improvement. A more personal attitude was added to the teachers' role. They were obliged to carry out personal, informal conversations with each of their students. Previously the process of developing a coherent school curriculum had resulted in the enhanced professionalism of teachers. This combined with the fact that it was difficult to understand the reason for the students low level of achievements, triggered the application in the school of a thorough self-evaluation process. On one hand teachers studied new assessment techniques; on the other they investigated their own work. Consequently a standards document was produced, to which all of them were committed.

The impact of the reports

At school S it was mainly the second and the third reports which left their impact on the school's work. In both cases the nature of the impact was similar, but it had

deepened between the second and the third reports. After receipt of the second report the school's curriculum had been somewhat changed; a resource allocation was carried out, as was a change of emphasis on certain subjects. The feeling that it was the right step taken at the right time triggered the intensive work of school self-evaluation.

Enhanced teacher responsibility and cooperation were both the cause and the effect of these processes. It promoted teachers' professionalism by enhancing their inquiry skills and their reflectiveness, and focusing their work. Applying a process of school self evaluation facilitated the dialogue with the external evaluation and promoted teachers' accountability. The documents produced concerning the school's standards and its ethical code for teachers' work might ensure more coherent work in future.

Discussion

The use of evaluation information has the potential to improve the work of schools. Originally, this study set out to investigate whether external evaluation information is used by schools to achieve this aim. The underlying assumption was that because the Israeli external evaluation procedure does not have a straightforward accountability context, most schools ignore the information that is presented in the external evaluation report (especially if they have reservations about the procedure and therefore mistrust the resulting report). However, the first finding of the study was that schools do use this information.

It is important to re-establish that, within this study, the external evaluation report is perceived as a source of information that is provided to the school. This report is based on data that was collected in the school from a range of participants – the head teacher, the teachers (about two-thirds of them) and all the students from fourth, fifth and sixth grades – regarding various aspects of the school's provision (see Appendix no. 2). It is fed back to the school as a summary, in the form of criteria suggested by the external body. Chapters Four–Seven dealt with the characteristics of each school, and the way the participants perceived the way their school responded to the report. The following chapter is based on a comparative analysis of all the case study schools. It starts with a brief description of methodological approaches, which had to be altered while the initial plan met the 'field'. The comparative analysis that follows was conducted in order to look for similarities and differences and identify the emerging themes. These were:

- staff perceptions regarding the quality of the source of information and its impact.
- the dissemination procedures.
- aspects of the organisation that contribute to its capacity for knowledge utilisation:
 - The schools' culture
 - Leadership in schools

- Teachers' learning in schools.

Conclusions and implications follow.

From theory to practice – altering approaches in the process of carrying out the research

- Limitations in applying a quantitative analysis in the teachers' questionnaires:
Since there was a small number of respondents in each school, a statistical analysis for investigating within-school variance was not possible. The number of returned questionnaires at each school was as follows: school G 11 questionnaires; school M 17 questionnaires (6 of those were fully answered, 8 half answered and, of the remaining 3 questionnaires, only the first page was answered); school H 19 questionnaires; school S 12 questionnaires. As a result, frequencies for each level on the Likert scale (from 'strongly agree' to 'disagree') were computed for each statement. The statements that showed higher frequencies were analysed with connection to specific themes that had been discussed in the interview to explore their verification or negation.
- The AP as a source of evidence: On its explicit level it could have been a straightforward source of learning about processes of knowledge utilisation at the schools. However, the analysis of this plan had its limitations. Schools have to develop an action plan based on the report's findings and consequent decision-making processes that aim at setting priorities for the school for the next year. They get a fixed template into which they have to insert their AP. So the structure of the AP is not unique to any school and the impact of the report on a school's action plan is obvious. It might be self-evident to check the extent to which the report influences a school by relating to its action plan. Nevertheless this analysis could help in exploring other aspects of school's capacity to improve and in triangulating findings of other sources.
- One reservation attaches to the finding that schools do use the information of the external evaluation report. As was mentioned, the four researched schools were

among the schools that were pointed out by the manager of the project as ‘schools that one can learn from’. However, as became evident during the research, even if these schools are highly ranked, they still have their variations and their individual combination of school characteristics. These variations offer a range of perspectives on the school engagement with externally provided information and highlight some of the challenges that schools face in this context and possible implications for it.

- The case studies’ selection – in setting out to conduct this research my aim was to find four schools which were essentially typical but had contrasting profiles. A whole year was devoted to carrying out this requirement. However, coming to the final stage, when I was left with nine schools from which I had to choose, I realised that only four of them had just recently received the external Meytzav report. This became the determining factor and, as a result, these four schools were self-chosen as the case study schools. Nevertheless, as is demonstrated in the findings chapters, this single fact did not restrict the variety of profiles of the four schools.
- Language limitations: there were many examples of the fact that the same concepts had different meanings for different participants of the research. These differences might exist among schools but also within a school itself. Among schools at least two significant examples might be drawn: the concept of self-evaluation and the concept of sharing new knowledge. This observation confirms Fullan’s (2005) remark: *‘the terms travel well, but the underlying conceptualization and thinking do not’*. Thus it was important to study further what these concepts meant in each of the contexts that they were used, before being able to draw conclusions from the findings.
- The changed place of the external report in my investigation: during this study my assessment of the significance which should be attached to the external report has changed. At first my plan was to use it as an external, quantitative source of information that could help define the school’s internal capacity to improve and its change over time. For that purpose, drawing on the wide range of knowledge specified in Chapter Two, I tried to find a correlation between

indicators which were included in the report that could reflect on the school's internal capacity to improve. With this idea in mind, the tables of the 'change over time' (tables 2–5) were created. While the study progressed my own doubts regarding the report's trustworthiness emerged. These doubts led to my repositioning the external findings as a background rather than another source of information. The source of my reservations, that emerged while reading the four tables of the 'change over time' in the different reports, can be found in the examples that follow. These reservations are the basis for the claim put forward at the conclusions to this study, that without a thorough contextual follow-up, the external report findings have to be dealt with with caution:

- Apparently in all schools there was an improvement (sometimes amazing) in the framework of discipline. While reading about it the following questions have to be asked: could it be that despite the different contexts of the four schools they were all mainly concerned with this aspect and consequently chose it as their priority and if so, what was the reason for that? Or is it easier for schools to relate to this aspect rather than to deal with other aspects?
- Fewer and fewer teachers were reporting on their use of traditional assessment techniques. Was this a reflection of the reality in all the four schools? i.e. had teachers learnt a variety of assessment tools and applied it, or had they learnt that they were expected to answer in this way?
- Within the three reports at schools G and S a higher percentage of teachers answered that they were worn out. Could something in the way they were working have caused it? Or is it a special combination of contextual factors, such as particular events in their school year, or the combination of personality differences, which might influence their perception of themselves?
- At school G fewer teachers than before perceived the head teacher as a pedagogical authority, and the same situation obtained regarding the feelings of teachers about the extent to which they were being consulted in

the process of decision-making. Similar findings emerged in the reports of school S. It might be that the new inclusive approach adopted in these two schools after the second report made teachers feel more included but that they went back to their original opinion once they became accustomed to this approach. Another interpretation is that the changing perceptions concerning these two topics (the head as a pedagogical leader and teachers playing a part in decision-making) belonged to the same equation – that while teachers became more involved and took a greater part in decision-making, they perceived the pedagogical authority of their head teacher as having declined: the pyramid had been straightened. These are only hypotheses; it is not possible to give a precise explanation. Therefore the reservation about the Meytzav report's reliability in reflecting the reality of the schools still stands.

- It is not certain that the criteria under which the different indicators were grouped and which were defined by the external body meant the same for each school or even each member who had the opportunity to read the report. In school G, at our last meeting the role holders offered a very complicated explanation of the finding concerning the part teachers played in decision-making. There may have been differences of understanding regarding the concept of 'taking part in decision-making'. The role holders claimed: *"while having the opportunity to initiate processes in the school and carry them out, it is possible that although this fact is a proof of having taken part in decision-making, teachers do not see that as part of the decision-making process"*, and so they answered in the negative to the questions regarding this aspect. Another explanation for the lower percentage of teachers answering positively regarding their taking a part in the processes of decision-making might be that the teachers who attended our meeting were all role holders at the school. It is probable that, playing a larger part in decision-making processes than other teachers who answered the external evaluation questionnaires, they imposed their own perceptions rather than those of other staff members.

- In three out of the four schools (school S being excepted) fewer teachers had high expectations of students during the three years. Within the same context it might be relevant to mention that in most interviews mainly head teachers, but teachers too, indicated that there were high expectations of students and of teachers at all schools. Was it their disappointment in students' achievements in the external exams? Was it the fact that they could compare their students' achievements to those in other schools? It might be that in all three schools teachers preferred to lower their expectations than be disappointed by the findings. At the same time it is worth indicating that in school S, which was the only school where teachers' expectations did not decline, they were very frustrated and disappointed with students' achievements as they read about them in the third report; it might be that their high expectations were the reason for their disappointment.

In conclusion, although the indicators of the report included elements that could be read as part of the school's capacity to improve, due to the above reservations it was not used as such. This is the reason that the report was read as one more document, a possible triangulation for other sources of information, bearing in mind its doubtful 'objectivity'.

Perceptions regarding the quality of the source of information

Teachers' reactions to the external evaluation procedure and its report are relevant to the conclusions of this study because among the factors that influence the extent of subsequent knowledge use are perceptions regarding the quality of the source of the information (Cousins and Leithwood, 1986). The extent to which teachers perceive the process as reliable influences their initial motivation, their willingness and their readiness to use its report.

The teachers' reactions are reflected in three different stages:

- their reactions to the process of collecting the data that would later provide the substance of the report;
- their reactions to and perceptions of the content of the report; including how far they feel they can trust it and
- their perceptions of the impact of the report on the school.

The findings from the study would lead to the conclusion that teachers' reactions to all three stages have become more sophisticated over time, and particularly so in three of the four schools.

Reactions to the external evaluation procedure – the data collection

Although in most of the schools the teachers' reactions changed over time, in general they all had reservations and concerns about the evaluation procedure and the way the data was collected. They felt fearful, frustrated and anxious during the process which culminated in a perception that they were not respected as professionals. These feelings were more widespread while experiencing the process for the first time. Even though they became more complex and less elementary over time, they were still present.

Teachers criticised various aspects of the process including the fact that it was '*conducted at one point in time*', whereas they believed that '*education/improvement (was) a process*'. The process, therefore, distorted the conclusions and overlooked individual and personal achievements. The telephone interviews also caused some concerns regarding the reliability and validity of the data. In some cases (e.g., school S), teachers felt that being interviewed by telephone indicated a lack of respect for their opinions, and thus they did not always take these interviews seriously. There were also concerns about some of the statements in the students' questionnaires which the teachers felt were misleading or not clear enough, and this raised further concerns about the validity of the data.

These concerns have implications for the relationship between the Ministry of Education and teachers in Israel. Fielding et al. (2005) found that developing certain

kinds of trusting relationships is fundamental to the transfer of good practice. In the case of this study, mistrust was evident. The teachers in more than one school claimed that dishonesty was inherent in the procedure because although it is declared that the report *...is solely a tool for the school to work with...*, inspectors (in Israel, all inspectors are employees of the Ministry of Education) use it as a basis to compare schools. The report, therefore, aims to monitor and control schools by comparing them (e.g., schools M and S). The teachers felt that the communication between the Department of Evaluation and the school was superficial. As a teacher in school H said: *'... it doesn't give the feeling that they really want to help us to improve...'* and another added: *'...they have to explain, to show us that they are not against us'*. Furthermore, teachers, referring to schools other than their own, talked about the process as *'a fertile ground for fraud'*, claiming that teachers prepared students for the exams, that head teachers prepared teachers for the phone interviews, and even that in some schools, the staff opened the exam papers prior to the exam.

Reactions to the report itself

On receiving the first report, the staff in most schools registered feelings of disappointment, anger and shock (even though there were many who had barely known about it). This led to their explicitly doubting the report's credibility as well as the credibility of those responsible for its dissemination. However, they did not ignore the report as a whole, but rather used it partially. Their use of parts of the information in the report might have been promoted by the fact that the report does not include guidance for action, nor does it provide a list of priorities for the schools, and thus it promotes discussion and develops teachers' ownership of the findings. Different points of view are expressed in the literature in regards with this issue. While Fitz-Gibbon and Stephenson-Foster (1999) say guidance is necessary in order *'not to lose the momentum'*, others (Cousins and Leithwood, 1993) suggest that leaving it for schools to decide might promote discussion and develop ownership of the findings, which is necessary for effective knowledge utilisation. The case of this research might confirm the later: whilst the report caused an initial negative response, this might be one of the reasons that schools used some of the findings.

Over time, most teachers, especially the head teachers, mellowed in their attitudes towards the report. The second and the third reports were no longer seen as a threat, but rather as a tool for improvement; as a document that presented standards to which the school should strive. Most saw the report as being appropriate, readable, clear, and relevant to schools' needs. The content was usually perceived as congruent with existing knowledge. In some cases staff described the second and the third reports as being comprehensive, objective, and user-friendly and these teachers thought it was a good source for learning. One head teacher talked of it as facilitating the process of identifying what needed to be improved. Generally, the attitude of the head teacher appeared crucial to how the teachers perceived the report. For example, when the teachers saw the report in a positive light it was usually because the head teacher insisted on not relating the findings to specific teachers, but rather to present them as the concern of all (e.g., school H). Time and familiarity were obviously a factor, but how quickly the process was accepted varied from school to school. Whereas in one case the head teacher claimed that because the report was external, she preferred to see it as one resource among many used in planning, in another the initial reactions of anger and resistance were simply replaced by criticism about the report's reliability.

Finally, despite initial reservations, three out of the four schools were able to come to terms with the report and were willing to use its findings.

Perceptions of the impact of the reports

The way the participants described the impact the reports had on their schools helps to understand their perceptions of the relationship between the school's reality, and the externally created image of the school in the reports. This point might serve as a small window to the school's capacity for knowledge utilisation. The connections made between changes at school and the reports' findings (i.e. 'its impact') suggest that the teachers had granted the findings a degree of credibility or at least moved from feeling they were in a weak position ("*They are doing it to us*") to having a sense of power and control ("*What can we do with the findings? How can we use them to improve our work at the school?*").

In most schools, processes became more sophisticated over time, and the same was true for teachers' perceptions of the impact of the report. This might have been the result of the head teacher's perception of the first report and the extent to which she made that report's findings available to other staff members. For example, with the first report, where the head teacher expressed satisfaction of it (school G), staff described a real, though sporadic, impact. In other schools, where the head teacher was the only one who read the first report (schools S and M) the participants reported a very limited impact.

With the subsequent reports, in three out of the four schools (G, H and S), staff gradually came to perceive the reports' impact as much more influential. To some extent, this was achieved by the widened dissemination procedures which took place in most of these schools. It is possible that with the first report they thought that it might 'go away' (as other educational reform did), but with the arrival of subsequent reports they acknowledged that this procedure had become regular and decided, consciously or non-consciously, to try and make the best use of it. Similarly, over time they might have realised its potential.

While it took some schools longer than others to accept that the report's impact on school was a positive one, they all agreed in identifying the areas where its impact was most clearly felt: in the spheres of technical changes, teachers' professionalism, and procedures of self-evaluation. It was on the extent or significance of this impact that they disagreed, some seeing the report as having a major impact, others claiming the impact was quite limited. In most cases the same key issues were mentioned, these were:

- **Technical changes** – These changes mainly concerned students' performance in the subject areas. They included dedicating more hours to the subject areas which were examined by the external procedure, and extra monitoring of the work of both teachers and students. In most cases the monitoring process was placed in a clearer and more explicit framework. The motivation for these new routines may have been originated in different sources: once the schools had received an external point of view of their students' achievements they wanted to check its accuracy, or they wanted to identify in more details the reasons for

those achievements. At the same time there was also their need to increase their awareness of what was happening in the school, before the next external evaluation takes place. External instructors were hired to help teachers improve students' performance. This resource allocation in schools changed, intentionally or unintentionally, their priorities, putting more emphasis on subject areas and especially those that were examined by the external procedure. Their instruction strategies also changed, more emphasis was put on individual and small group work, in the belief that this would promote student attainment.

- **Changes in school culture** – This included a 'whole school' approach, incorporating variations which were the result of each school's existing culture. One head teacher talked of enhanced continuity between classes, and the improved coherence of the school's curriculum. In another school there were references to opportunities for developing a shared language. In two schools, teachers claimed that the level of transparency and openness among them was enhanced, generating greater unity among the staff and fostering a fresh dialogue.
- **Enhanced teacher professionalism** – This was particularly noticeable in two of the schools where the teachers talked of sharing responsibility for students' achievements; reflecting on their work and developing their inquiry skills which intensified the focus of their work, and enhanced co-operation and teamwork. They also felt they had more influence in decision-making.
- **Enhanced procedures of self-evaluation at schools** – While staff from more schools mentioned this enhancement as part of the impact of the external evaluation, 'processes of self-evaluation' meant different things in different schools. In some cases only elementary procedures were applied whereas in other schools more sophisticated ones were utilised. For example, in one school processes that could monitor student attainment and teachers' ways of working were initiated, while another school started to explore the themes that emerged from the external evaluation findings. Results emerging from the most sophisticated case meant that the staff had started to inquire about their

own attitudes and beliefs, and had tried to reconcile these with the themes emerging from the findings of the report. In this last case the scope of the self-evaluation was wider, and originated from a deeper level of thinking. It is processes like this that might eventually lead to a deeper and more 'real' change.

There appeared to be a chronology to the impact on the schools. In most cases the technical/structural changes were made first, followed by changes in the teachers' practice, and only at the last stage, if indeed there was a change, was there an influence on the teachers' attitudes and beliefs. Similar relationships between structure and culture are mentioned in Swaffield and MacBeath's research (2006). In this context it is worth remembering that without a change in people's beliefs and values it has been claimed that a "real" change is restricted, or does not happen at all (for example, Hargreaves et al. 2001). Moreover, when the school structure is changing while the school culture does not, the danger of short-lived and superficial changes is real (Stoll and Wikeley, 1998). But should changing people's attitudes be the first step in laying out the ground for change, or does the way it happened at these schools imply a "real" change? It is possible to claim that in schools where teachers had first to change their practices and only later gained new understandings, the change was '*done to them* (at least at the beginning of the process) *rather than done with them*' (Fullan, and Hargreaves, 1995). Did it make the change at school S (where the first step was conducting an inquiry into teachers' beliefs and attitudes) more 'real', more sustainable? It would take a continuing investigation of these schools to answer this question.

Despite the fact that in three schools the report was received, sooner or later, with a generally positive attitude, the perception of its impact varied. Whereas in some cases staff saw the impact as widespread, in others it was perceived as intermittent and limited. To explore the reasons for this it became necessary to look in more detail into factors and conditions at the four schools, as well as into the processes that might have influenced these perceptions.

The first step of this investigation was to trace the effect of the different dissemination procedures that were used in the four schools, including changes over time. The

connections between these procedures and aspects of the organisation that contribute to the school's capacity for knowledge utilisation were also investigated.

Dissemination procedures

As mentioned earlier, Louis argued in relation to the use of school-focused knowledge that *'The core problem to be solved by this approach is how to disseminate relevant, new information to those in schools so that it will be attended to and subsequently incorporated into their thinking about the purpose and means of improving their schools'* (Louis, 1992).

In the case of Meytzav the above emphasis is crucial because the head teacher is the one receiving the report and, at least on its explicit level, has the authority to decide how she wants to share the information – with whom, in what way, to what extent, and according to what time-scale. Examining the dissemination procedures at all four schools produced two main findings: as processes at each school changed over time, they became more sophisticated, and they engaged an increasing number of staff members with the findings.

The effect of the school's state of readiness

The dissemination processes varied among the schools, a fact partly related to the state of readiness within each school.

Readiness is a state of mind which is fundamental for getting started on an improvement initiative. The findings of this study suggest that the state of readiness influenced the dissemination procedures as well as consequent use of the findings. Obviously readiness, although an important one, was not the only factor. Stoll (1994) and MacBeath (1999) argue that schools are at different stages of readiness for change whether the impetus towards change has been initiated externally or internally. Both make further claims that improvement conditions and strategies must meet the stage of readiness at each school. In the case of the current research ignoring schools'

readiness limited consequent processes at those schools to an extent. The way it was limited is connected to other variables, which are detailed later.

Readiness presupposes willingness but at the same time it does not ensure sustainability. Apparently there has to be readiness before choosing to get involved in an external improvement initiative and there are certain factors and conditions which influence this readiness. There are stages in this involvement: first having the will to get involved, then getting started, and finally having the capacity to sustain it. It is important to attempt to specify the conditions and factors which influence readiness [see Fullan (1990) page 29], so that it would be possible to try to ensure their existence before launching any initiative and thus avoid becoming frustrated when it fails to work.

In all four schools the head teacher was the one who received the report and usually, the SMT, or some of them, were the first ones with whom she shared it. However, beyond that the process of dissemination varied across the four schools. The patterns of dissemination were related to the schools' culture, including structures and routines used at different schools for sharing information among staff, and to leadership at these schools. As was argued in Chapter Two, and will be discussed later, leadership and school culture include issues of power and politics. While most of the researched head teachers complied with the external implicit demand to use the report's findings, they might have done so because they recognised that the *'command is reasonable in terms of their own values – either because its content is legitimate and reasonable or because it has been arrived at through legitimate and reasonable procedure'* (Lukes, 2005, p. 18). However, in some cases, they 'stripped their staff of the choice between compliance and noncompliance' (Lukes op cit.), and used manipulation as a force. Teachers in two of the researched schools did not get the opportunity to recognise the source or the exact nature of the demand upon them. Careful examination of the patterns of dissemination and structures at each school reflects some features of that school's capacity for knowledge utilisation.

The effect of school culture and leadership style on dissemination processes

In general, it is evident that processes of dissemination of the reports' findings were among many similar processes that were carried out at each school. As demonstrated in the following examples, in all cases the dissemination procedures were closely related to the school's culture as well as to its features of leadership. Although the issue of leadership will be discussed separately, features of leadership that are relevant to the dissemination processes are mentioned in this frame of reference.

At a school that was characterised by a 'disciplined' culture, where staff were used to taking mutual responsibility and to sharing knowledge in very clear and well-defined procedures, the dissemination process offered a further opportunity to apply these. Time was dedicated for that purpose and structures were maintained. In another case the dissemination process involved the whole staff and reflected, as in the previous case, other features of the school culture, the dissemination procedure being kept within a pre-established frame of reference (see page 139). In this case, one explanation could be their low state of readiness to accept the external evaluation (especially in the case of the first report), or the head teacher being inexperienced.

Nevertheless, being inexperienced did not necessarily produce the same attitude. In another case, the newly appointed head teacher worked with the staff 'at their eye level', and disseminating the findings of the report was one more opportunity to share decision-making with them. To the same end, teachers and the head teacher acknowledged the fact that time and structures needed to be dedicated to professional development processes, including opportunities to clarify their attitudes, beliefs and values and to share their newly acquired knowledge. The open discussion, in which all staff members took part, was probably rooted in the head teacher's perception, seeing herself as part of the staff and at the same time being an instructor for them. Moreover, it was a beginning of a process rather than a whole process: it opened up opportunities for further discussion. The contextual nature of the processes was very clear. In two of the cases despite the similarity of the dissemination, having very well defined boundaries, these processes took different contextual shades. As in all the other cases, limited dissemination processes in one of the schools were clearly a result

of that school's culture. The suspicion expressed towards elements external to the regular daily working of that school resulted on occasion in shallow reactions. The same might be the reason for the approach applied concerning the dissemination of the external report. In this school fragmented ways of communication were apparent, most of the work was done in small groups of teachers, and consequently the dissemination was very limited. It is possible here, as well, to connect these processes to this school leadership: the significant role that the SMT had at this school was applied in the case of dissemination procedures. The head teacher consulted the deputies, and decisions concerning further dissemination were left to them. Consequently, no time was dedicated to sharing or discussion processes.

Another aspect of school culture is the place designated for parents in their children's education. A correlation was found between parents as the target of the reports' findings and other opportunities afforded them to take part in educational processes.

Table no. 6 summarizes the connections between teachers perceiving the parents as partners in the educational process in daily school life, the way these perceptions are reflected in Meytzav reports, as well as the parents' place in the dissemination process at each school.

Table no. 6 – Parents as partners in the educational process

School Parents as partners	School G	School M	School H	School S
In daily school life	Complex processes with parents involving them in their children's successes as well as their failures. Parents are known by their names.	Parents were NOT mentioned in the process of data collection for this study	Parents were NOT mentioned in the process of data collection for this study	Parents were mentioned many times as influential elements in the educational process and the school's community. Parents are known by their names.
Percentage of teachers answering positively to the statement in Meytzav interview³⁰	1 st report: 80% (N=15)	1 st report: 30% (N=28)	1 st report: 78% (N=18)	1 st report: 82% (N=15)
	2 nd report: 93% (N=15)	2 nd report: 58% (N=28)	2 nd report: 63% (N=18)	2 nd report: 80% (N=15)
	3 rd report: 72% (N=15)	3 rd report: 60% (N=28)	3 rd report: 60% (N=18)	3 rd report: 75% (N=15)
The report's dissemination	The findings were presented to parents' central committee	The second report was presented to parents for consultation regarding students' achievements	Parents were not audience for the findings of the report	The findings were presented to the parents' central committee

The part that the parents take in schooling, as perceived by the teachers in the case study schools, paralleled their part in dissemination procedures. In most cases (to a lesser extent in school M) there was a correlation between the place parents took in the school's life and their place as target for the report's findings. The reports' findings concerning the place of the parents in schools corroborate, in most cases, the findings of the current study. In conclusion, the dissemination procedures are usually related to each school's culture, including the place designated to parents as partners in the educational process in daily school life.

³⁰ Teachers perceived the parents as partners in the educational process

Summary

Connections could be traced among other structures and procedures used at the school to share information among staff, and the processes of dissemination. Yet, as argued in Chapter Two (pages 21–22), a school's capacity for knowledge utilisation includes the processes in place for sharing information and creating new knowledge; it is influenced by that school's culture and patterns of leadership. These may vary to the same extent as the dissemination processes are varied among schools. Cousins and Leithwood (1993) draw a straightforward connection between dissemination and improvement, implying that if we can find the effective ways to disseminate new information in schools it will help the schools to think about *the purpose for improving and the means to improve their schools*. But this is only one side of the equation. The other side, which is not less important, is aspects of the setting including learning processes in schools. Although learning processes are part of the setting they are especially highlighted in this study because, as was argued earlier, knowledge utilisation, which is the main focus of this study, is about learning. All these will be examined as aspects of the organisation which contribute to its capacity for knowledge utilisation.

Aspects of the organisation that contribute to school's capacity for knowledge utilisation

Capacity and readiness are closely linked. However, whereas capacity is defined as a fundamental condition for a school's ability to sustain any improvement initiative, readiness is fundamental for getting started. Capacity is a holistic, containing, phenomenon. In this study, capacity for knowledge utilisation was investigated. Furthermore, capacity for knowledge utilisation is fundamental to the school's capacity to improve, and thus the findings may be significant in a wider context.

The capacity for knowledge utilisation is defined by a combination of factors and conditions, including teacher-learning, whereby staff becomes able to use new data or information and to enhance that school's capacity to improve. Knowing their school, willing to be engaged in constant inquiry and reflection, sharing decision-making, being committed and involved, are only some of the attributes that staff members

must have in order to enhance this capacity. Within the framework of the current study the practice of knowledge utilisation refers to information that has been externally provided. Enhancing this capacity is a never-ending, spiral process.

An organisation or an individual can improve their capacity once they realize the lack of it, the need for it and the specific issues that need improvement, and once they are ready to act. Meytzav, as with many other external evaluation initiatives, aims to point to the aspects that have to be improved, to raise awareness of weaknesses in the school's capacity. The extent to which this potential of Meytzav is used and the manner in which it is done may have implications for a school's capacity for knowledge utilisation, which will be the subject for examination in the following section.

The culture of the schools

Indicators of culture that emerged from the findings as being connected to processes of knowledge utilisation in schools included: shared responsibility for students, commitment, co-operation, openness, whole-school work, and the existence of an encouraging environment. Other indicators included the staff constituting a cohesive group and the existence of structures for knowledge sharing. Learning was valued at all four schools.

Group cohesion, shared educational values and open communication structures can be understood from a careful reading of the teachers' and the head teacher's perceptions of the processes of each school. Apparently, in the school where the teachers and the head teacher had almost identical educational values, the 'party line' was clear and shared by all. This might imply a cohesive group that shared structured communication patterns. The other extreme was represented by a school where teachers' educational perceptions were different from those of the head teacher. That school lacked cohesiveness, and it is possible that those different perceptions originated from a lack of shared structures for effective communication.

In three of the four schools, teachers mentioned special structures that had been created in the school in order to give them opportunities to share. However, the sharing was different in the various schools. In one school, teachers spoke about

having opportunities to share the new knowledge and expertise that they had acquired in extra-mural courses. In another, teachers spoke mainly about sharing new knowledge with regard to subject areas, usually in their small group meetings. In the third school sharing new knowledge occurred while clarifying teachers' attitudes, beliefs and values. In the fourth, sharing meant monitoring students' achievements as well as teachers' progress within the school curriculum. The last case differed from the other three in most of the above components. This might be partly due to the fact that it was a big school in which communication was fragmentary. Each teacher felt responsible for her own class, no shared responsibility was mentioned, and there was no commitment or whole-school, co-operative work. Although the head teacher declared that it was a 'learning school', no knowledge-sharing structures were described; teachers were used to sharing only within their small groups. In all of the cases, knowledge-sharing structures were among the fundamental conditions constituting the capacity for knowledge utilisation. The nature of sharing and the existence of structures to do so influenced the level of sophistication of knowledge utilisation.

It is claimed that all the above components of a school's culture are connected to the internal capacity of a school (Fullan, 1993; Hopkins, 1994, 2001; Stoll and Fink 1996; Hoeben, 1998; Stoll and Wikeley, 1998; Fullan, 1999; Reynolds, 1999; Stoll, 1999). The findings of the current research indicate that they are also connected to a school's capacity for knowledge utilisation. Leadership issues, which comprise another dimension of a school's internal capacity and are part of a school's setting, will be examined by referring to processes and structures at the different schools. First, the role perception and the structure of the SMT will be the focus, then the processes that have been already dealt with – such as the dissemination of reports and the development and implementation of the action plan – will be discussed, and finally, but not less importantly, the place of the head teachers in the schools will be examined by relying on their own role perceptions and the staff's perceptions of them.

Leadership – perceptions and structures

The SMT

There was a SMT in all four schools. Since having an SMT at school is almost a norm in Israel this does not necessarily reflect any special perceptions regarding school's leadership in any specific school. Apart from small nuances, the structure of three of the four SMTs was similar. In the fourth the structure of the SMT and the responsibilities they carried were different. The head teacher's perception of their informal role and the scope of their responsibilities³¹ were different in each school. This further emphasises the unique context of each school.

At the school where the responsibilities among SMT members were differently distributed, it took the following shape: whereas in all other schools each member was responsible for two or three grade levels, at that school rather than being responsible for an age group, their roles were associated with specific school aims. It might imply that there was a very strong emphasis on the implementation of the school aims and it probably enhanced the whole-school work because each aim was implemented in a whole-school context. It is possible that being a small school facilitated that structure. Alternatively, it might indicate the head teacher's need to keep control; as she was highly involved with teachers' and students' work. This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that there was no information regarding the SMT direct routines of work with teachers. The head teacher's control was marked in other routines and structures of the school, which will be further discussed within the next section. The 'disciplined' culture in that particular school has already been mentioned in previous sections, as well as the way structures for communication are contained mostly in whole-staff meetings rather than in small groups. Another issue that seems to be significant is that the same school was the only one where the SMT members were frequently replaced. This might restrict their possibility of sharing leadership, and again, enhance the head teacher's control (by remaining the 'expert'). At the same time, in the long run more teachers would share these roles, which might widen the scope of people who gained first hand acquaintance with the school's aims as well as

³¹ See appendix no. 11 for the comparison between the four SMTs.

the scope of people who might empathise to a higher extent with the role holders at the school.

In three schools apart from the SMT who were responsible for grade levels, there were other teachers who were responsible for subject areas. Usually these were the subject areas of the external exams. At school S there might have been a significant change in role distribution, a change perhaps reflecting the head teacher's open mind-set towards teachers' initiatives. It might as well reflect her driving force to take risks in order to involve more teachers in processes, to share responsibility, and to enhance teachers' leadership. The idea had already been mooted by her, but the study ended before it could be put into practice.

At school M each SMT member acted as a head teacher for the grades she was responsible for. This might have been one of the reasons for the fragmented ways of communication, which influenced the processes of knowledge utilisation at that school.

Apparently, where monitoring and follow-up stayed to a large extent in the hands of the head teacher (schools G and S) it was done for different reasons. In one case the head teacher felt that it was part of her role to instruct the teachers, and keeping control was equally important for her, whereas in the other, the head teacher acted as both instructor and facilitator for the teachers. Apparently the differences among the SMT in the different schools concerning the scope of their responsibility and the head teacher's perception of their role, influenced their involvement in processes of the use of the external evaluation information.

The Role of the Teachers and the SMT in the dissemination of the external reports and in the implementation processes

As was mentioned in the part that discussed the dissemination procedure, the SMT were always the first group to discuss the findings of the different reports with the head teacher. This might be partly due to the hierarchy which was clear in all four schools. The difference in school M was that they were called 'deputy heads' which might be more than only a semantic matter. When the head teachers described the dissemination procedures that were carried out by them with their SMT, different

verbs were used: ‘analyse’, ‘present’, ‘read’ and ‘discuss’. Apparently ‘analysis’ is a more sophisticated means of dissemination than ‘discussion’. Consequently, the SMT of a school where ‘analyses’ took place were significantly more involved in the processes of dissemination, and this procedure became more sophisticated in subsequent years (e.g., school S). In all other schools SMT members had a rather technical role in the dissemination processes. In conclusion, the combination of the way the head teacher perceived the depth of dissemination at her school, as well as her perception of the role of the SMT, influenced the level of sophistication in this process.

Each school is required to consider the findings in the report and write an action plan (AP). While carrying out the second external evaluation procedure the evaluation department of the Ministry of Education quarried staff involvement at the different stages of developing the AP. The following table presents teachers’ involvement in the AP’s development at each school as reflected in the findings of the reports of 2002.

Table no. 7 – Teachers’ perceptions of their engagement with the Action Plan

Teachers’ perceptions of the Action Plan	Percentages of positive answers			
	School S (N=15)	School G (N= 15)	School M (N= 28)	School H (N= 18)
Teachers were aware of the AP	80%	92%	48%	62%
Teachers discussed the AP	88%	75%	50%	92%
The AP was clarified to the teachers	100%	92%	92%	87%
Teachers were fully taking part in developing the AP	100%	65%	65%	65%
Teachers believed that the AP was a powerful tool	100%	82%	100%	92%

The above is an opportunity to reveal the extent to which a work-plan is done ‘with’ the teachers or ‘to’ them (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992). Regarding the perceptions of the AP a high percentage of teachers believed that it was a powerful tool and reported that the AP was clarified to them. About a third of the answering teachers (at schools G, H and M) did not feel that they were taking part in developing the AP. This was totally different at school S, where all the teachers felt that they are taking part in it. Knowing the procedure that was applied at that school, where each teacher was responsible for reflecting on her own teaching, draw conclusions and write a part of the action plan, this is not surprising. Similarly, a considerable number of teachers at

school H indicated that the action plan was discussed with them. This might be the result of the head teacher's emphasis (within the frame of this study) that in class observations she asks teachers to indicate where the specific lesson fits into the AP. The percentage of teachers that feel that the AP was discussed with them was not surprisingly the smallest at school M, where a fragmented structure of communication was present and not very high at school G. This finding (in school G) confirms the staff perception of the SMT role in developing the AP at that school, where they saw it as the responsibility of the SMT and were happy to leave it like this, saying: '*they are doing a good job*'.

The above information can reflect a dimension of teachers' involvement, and especially the extent to which they perceived themselves as taking part in decision-making processes at their school, at least those concerning the definition of the AP.

In summary, in all schools SMT members played a significant role. This varied according to the different contexts: their scope of responsibilities, the actual distribution of leadership, the extent to which the head teacher trusted them. There were cases where she perceived them as her own extension for implementation, and other cases where she gave them the opportunity to apply their own style of implementation. In other words it is a question of how far they were perceived as *a back-up for the head teacher's ideas* (e.g., school M), or as *a support system for teachers* (e.g., school H). The extent to which teachers played a part in decision-making processes varied. It was always the head teacher's perception of the place of other members of staff that influenced their involvement in these processes.

The issues which have been discussed so far demonstrate conclusively that if it was not accurate but possible, for the sake of clarity, to extricate elements of schooling in the literature review and study them separately, it is impossible to do the same when it comes to the findings. The most obvious example is in the case of leadership. Issues of leadership were a significant part of the earlier arguments concerning processes as well as of the perceptions of these processes at schools. Issues of power and politics are crucial in the context of the external initiatives that schools are expected to adopt and to implement for their improvement. Moreover, in the case of Meytzav, where the head teacher is in the pivotal position of receiving the report and deciding upon the

level and the nature of the school's engagement with it, issues of power and politics become an integral part of the discussion concerning the different styles of leadership at schools. In the following section the issue of power and politics will be discussed within the framework of the head teacher's headship style across schools.

The Head Teachers: Styles of Leadership

Motivation to use the external report – It has already been mentioned that head teachers might encourage their staff to adopt a specific external mandated reform (Datnow, 2000; Day et al. 2000), though the origins for their motivation to do so might differ. It is important to remember that in the case of Meytzav schools are not obligated to use the information provided in the report. Explicitly, it is not an issue of accountability, and there are no consequent sanctions embedded in the results. However, different head teachers encouraged their staff, for a variety of reasons, to use the report's findings.

One reason for this might be their need to *appease the more powerful actors in this equation* (Datnow, 2000), e.g., school M, where it is not surprising that teachers at that school perceived the report mainly as a tool for external purposes. Another source of motivation to encourage teachers to adopt an external mandated reform might be to *gain assistance and support for her/his (the head teacher's) own approach* (Stoll and Fink, 1998) or, as Wilcox and Gray (1995) put it, *there was an indication that head teachers saw external initiative as a means of furthering their own aspirations* (p. 205). It seems that two of the head teachers (schools S and G) used it for that purpose, but in different ways. Whereas at school G the head teacher used it mainly as a whip in her hand, an overt pressure exerted by her (Lukes, 2005) – but did not realise that she was doing so, as her perception of motivating teachers incorporated the strategy of 'the stick and the carrot' – at school S the head teacher used it to back up her own ideas concerning the need for teachers to undertake further study. Furthermore, with the school having students at a low socio-economic level (school G), the head teacher felt it was important *'to break the paradigm of the connection between socio-economic level and academic achievements'*. It was equally important for her to prove her argument and to get external approval for it. Therefore, an emphasis was put on enhancing students' achievements in the external evaluation.

In conclusion, even though the head teachers described the same motivation to use the findings, the origins of the motivation differed and were influenced mainly by their educational perceptions and their role perception.

Teachers' co-operation – The way teachers reacted towards my visits may also serve as an indication of their co-operation with the head teacher or their perception of her leadership; the fact that she was the one who approved my visits reflects on the internal relationship of the staff and the head teacher. This point is discussed in the section of 'the place of the researcher' (see Methodology chapter, page 61). The 'disciplined' culture of one school, the fragmented ways of communication in the other, could be corroborated by my own experience in these meetings.

Language matters – The choice of language by the head teacher may offer another means of understanding of the way she perceives herself and her role at school. At school M the head teacher usually spoke of herself as representing general decisions: it '*bothered me*' so '*we decided*'. On another occasion: '*I made a change*' and now '*it is clearer*'. It sounded like a 'one-man show'; she did not necessarily look for the staff feedback. At school H it was always first person plural – 'we', it was never 'them' (the staff) and 'me' (the head teacher). At school G the head teacher gave her account of processes in the first person: 'I did', 'I thought', etc. even when she was referring to the staff or all teachers. This could well imply that her perception of herself was of a visionary leader showing the way for teachers, and it might explain why the school appeared to have one unified voice. Thus the use of language can be another source to negate or affirm aspects of the style of leadership, as has emerged from other measures of the study.

Perceptions of the head teacher's role at the schools – the data gathered for this study confirms the claims made within a vast body of literature (Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach, 2000; Mortimore, 2000; Louis et al., 1995; Stoll, 1999) that head teachers at schools have a pivotal role. Their role includes formal and informal features, to be applied in management and leadership responsibilities. The way head teachers perceive their role and their scope of responsibilities and the way others at the school perceive them might provide another point of reference regarding the school's leadership. However, while trying to identify the leadership styles of the four

head teachers, it was not enough to describe features of control, monitoring, sharing and so on. As claimed earlier, it was equally important to follow the origin and the motivation for each of them, in order to achieve a better understanding of these features.

School M – the head teacher of school M described herself as '*the inspiration of the school*', which was somewhat ironic, as she was actually not much involved in teachers' work at all. It might strengthen the above observation of being 'one man show'. The hectic and disorganized environment at this school (see Chapter Five, p. 111-112) could suggest that the head teacher had limited control over what was happening at the school. She herself seemed to be disorganized. It would appear that it was the limited extent to which she had control that influenced her need to dictate to teachers, imposing her values and practices on them. This can be interpreted as a shallow manner of working, an approach that takes no account of the professionalism of her teachers. Backed up by her deputies, she made decisions without consulting other staff members, and this had reduced the staff's commitment, involvement and responsibility towards the school. Generally, it was 'the school versus external forces'. Her method was to appease those higher in the hierarchy and to treat the others with suspicion. Her style of leadership might be a representation of 'a 'fragmented school' (Harris and Lambert, 2003) where *'those in formal leadership positions may operate much of the time in a laissez-faire and unpredictable fashion (with intermittent periods of autocratic rule)*' (p. 27). In some situations she was dictatorial, patronising, controlling and authoritarian. A straightforward manifestation of the head teacher's use of power might be the fact that almost a third of the teachers were sent away by her, a feature of power which is shared between her and the head teacher of school G. Whereas in school M the head teacher's control partly compensated for the hectic and disorganised environment as well as her disorganised way of getting along, in the case of school G its origin was different. Whereas both head teachers used their position to manipulate their teachers, at school M it was done by not giving the staff the opportunity to recognize the exact nature of the report and therefore its demand upon them, while at school G, as exemplified hereafter, pressure was exerted in such a way that things got done without those doing them being aware of the pressure [See: Lukes, (2005) the three-dimensional view on power].

School G – the head teacher at school G was highly involved with the work that was done at the school, and the school was run by her as a highly disciplined unit. She was clear as to her own methods and values, and she strove to get the staff to adopt them, too. Nevertheless the teachers' motivation to be committed and involved at school G has to be questioned. What was it that persuaded them to work in such an orderly manner? Was it a manifestation of their feeling that they were part of a whole, or of their knowing that they might be asked to leave if the head teacher was not satisfied with the quality of their work? Although teachers felt proud for being a part of the school, they conveyed the impression that they always felt their loyalty was being challenged. Therefore Lukes's definition for the three-dimensional view on power is not straightforward in this case. It is the case for the explicit level but not necessarily for its implicit one.

In some ways the head teacher had a very authoritarian role within the staff. For example, although teachers felt that she was attentive to their needs, the emotional well-being of staff was her concern only as long as they acted in accordance with her beliefs, ideas and perceptions. She did not hesitate to 'tell off' teachers, and claimed that even when teachers were initially threatened by her they would appreciate her intervention at a later stage. Teachers confirmed this by saying: "*We follow her*". They felt supported by her but also that they were always under scrutiny. The head teacher felt that in this way she was able to fulfil her responsibility. On occasion the head teacher manipulated the teachers (Chapter Four, p. 96). She was perceived by the staff and by herself as very ambitious and promoted excellence among all adults and children alike. She demanded high standards of her staff, and was the first one to apply it. Modelling, being one mechanism for leadership (see Chapter Two, p. 32), was one of the mechanisms she used for leading learning, but at the same time she dedicated a significant part of her time to monitoring and controlling the work of the staff.

Her perception of her role included the following aspects: demonstrating teaching skills, following up teachers' work in the class, instructing teachers, and at the same time keeping control.

School H – monitoring processes were also highly emphasised as part of the head teacher's role. Here, the monitoring was accompanied by thorough paperwork. It seems that these formalities helped the head teacher to draw up the framework for the work of the school. The head teacher was not very experienced and because of this, as well as the fact that the school was quite new and had been stable in its population for only the last two years, the externally provided boundaries might have functioned as a secure frame of reference. Certainly her attempt to draw such a secure frame of reference characterized her leadership. Another example might be her insistence on not exposing the teachers whose classes did not have high achievements at the external procedure. It might be that the fact that I was forbidden to attend a staff meeting originated from the same attitude.

The head teacher herself saw her role as leading and setting the ethos of the staff work. She saw her monitoring of teachers' work as part of the need to follow up the implementation of the action plan. Teachers perceived her as a pedagogical leader, and relied on her to provide them with plans directing them as to how to improve their students' performance.

The head teacher felt she offered real responsibility to the coordinators, and encouraged them to share their responsibility with teachers. Several procedures were applied, procedures that involved self-reflection and gave the opportunity for teachers' voice to be heard. The head teacher also believed that if many staff members were involved in the planning stages it would enhance their responsibility. Their accounts of having opportunities to share their knowledge, and knowing what was expected of them, confirm this.

School S – the head teacher of school S described herself as a colleague of her teachers, as well as a mentor. Apparently the fact that she had been newly appointed from the ranks, having been a member of staff, resulted in this perception. She set clear boundaries but at the same time wanted to give teachers a feeling that she was one of them; she listened to them and was open to their ideas. Decisions were made in whole-staff meetings.

Monitoring teachers' work, the implementation of the curriculum, and students' achievements, and offering her help in case of difficulty, was all perceived by her as a part of her role. She believed in students' and teachers' ability to succeed, shared decision-making with them, and was involved with their work. The culture of the school, which included respect to all, was a manifestation of her attentiveness to teachers' and students' needs and her care for their emotional well-being. Most of the professional instruction was done by teachers in the school. It appears that she appreciated the teachers' professionalism and made efforts to increase it. Her headship included innovative and challenging approaches, involving risk-taking: the way the new AP was developed to involve all teachers, the plea to all teachers to offer the substance for a new SMT. The topics chosen for the school's self-evaluation were all a result of these approaches. They also implied a real willingness to distribute leadership among staff members. By her perception of the place of the external evaluation versus the internal one she set an intellectual, stimulating challenge for the staff.

If we try to illustrate the four head teachers' styles of leadership we might come up with the following descriptions:

The head teacher of school M was 'the survivor' – leadership was kept to the head teacher and her SMT (deputies).

The head teacher of school G was 'the commandant' – leadership was distributed only to the extent that the head teacher was able to keep control.

The head teacher of school H was 'the protector' – distributed, shared leadership was a reality at this school.

The head teacher of school S was 'the innovator' – there was a critical mass of leaders (Fullan, 2005), and 'invitational' messages were provided to people (Stoll and Fink, 1996). Transformational leadership was practised in this school.

It has already been mentioned that research (Cousins and Leithwood, 1986; Huberman, 1994; Louis, 1998; Davies, 1999; Creemers, 2001) draws a

straightforward correlation between dissemination procedures, aspects of the setting, and improvement. Both dissemination procedures and the aspects of the setting which were revealed as being significant for processes of knowledge utilisation were discussed above. Teachers' learning provides another significant aspect, and is the issue for discussion in the next section. It includes professional learning communities (PLC) and organisational learning (OL) that provide the structures and opportunities for knowledge utilisation in schools.

Hargreaves (1994) emphasised the need of the teacher to be a lifelong learner if any improvement was to occur, as did Stoll L., Fink D. and Earl L. (2003) in the introduction to their book, they argue that *the ability to learn, unlearn and relearn* is crucial in a changing and developing world. Therefore the capacity for knowledge utilisation that facilitates the creation of the teacher's own contextual knowledge base by combining practical with external knowledge is crucial (Fullan, 2001; Mitchell, 1998). Dealing with externally generated information, its potential to be contextualized and implemented in a school depends to a large extent on teachers' abilities and perceptions (Dalin, 1995; Hargreaves, 2001) and on local contextual structures and routines. In the following section the issue of learning at the four schools will be discussed.

Teachers' learning at the schools

This study is about schools learning to use external information in order to improve. The schools' staff and mainly the schools' head teachers described themselves, in various ways, as '*learning schools*' and declared that students' and adults' learning was valued. This declaration was put into practice by structures that were created for teachers' learning and routines that were applied in all schools for the same purpose. A careful examination of these structures and these routines might, among other things, highlight the effectiveness of organisational learning in schools, their being professional learning communities, and the effectiveness of their capacity for knowledge utilisation.

The structures and routines usually varied in accordance with that school's culture, the head teacher's educational perceptions, and the style of leadership at the school.

Motivation to learn – At school G, for example, most teachers drew the connection between their own learning and ‘*success in the external exams*’, as did teachers at school H, who connected their own learning to ‘*students’ achievements*’. At both schools this might imply a ‘can do’ attitude and the significant place that teachers allocated to the external exams. At school G they also connected their learning to the head teacher’s satisfaction with their work: it was the only school where teachers mentioned this attitude of the head teacher. Knowing the extent of control of the head teacher at this school, and a significant teacher turn-over as a result of her dissatisfaction with their work, explains this view. At school H, where whole-school work was promoted and considered to be important, professional learning was considered as one means by which to facilitate this.

Internal and external courses – However, similarity can be observed among all cases mainly with reference to the INSET and to a lesser extent with reference to extra-mural courses. Concerning the INSET, despite the fact that teachers could influence its content and occasionally the school’s coordinators were the ones who were responsible for initiating the INSETs, in all cases teachers did not feel that the topics chosen for INSETs were pertinent to their needs. Routines for teachers’ learning at school existed in all four cases. Nevertheless, they varied according to the persons in charge (external or internal), the extent of their control (small groups or whole-staff meetings) and their content (the issues discussed).

In all four schools teachers took extra-mural courses. Usually the head teacher was involved in deciding which courses they were to attend. At school G she *decided* which courses they would attend; at all other schools teachers and the head teacher *decided together*; in one of them the head teacher tried to *direct* the teachers according to the *school’s needs*. Teachers and head teachers perceived these courses as part of becoming more professional. Still, in most cases, teachers claimed that the courses they took enlarged their personal knowledge to a much higher extent than their practical knowledge. Occasionally (e.g., schools S and H), the external courses were considered also an essential step towards gaining expertise before taking on a new responsibility at the school. Thus it is not surprising that in these cases most of the professional instruction was done by teachers who were appropriately qualified, and their work was highly appreciated. In these two schools, as was mentioned earlier,

distributed leadership was evident, teachers having the role of professional instructors was part of this distribution.

Sharing new knowledge – Returning from their external studies, teachers were usually given opportunities to share their new knowledge. This had been done in the same typical frame of reference at each school: small groups of teachers accompanied by an external instructor or a group led by an internal instructor. In one case where structures and routines in general were well defined, the structure for sharing new knowledge (learnt outside the school) was strictly defined and so were other opportunities of sharing new knowledge. Some of the whole-staff meetings were dedicated for that purpose and the head teacher used to help the teacher presenting to prepare for that meeting beforehand (was it another opportunity for her to keep control of the subsequent meeting content?).

In order to learn how to make the best use of the external information, which was based on data that was collected from the school and fed back to it, schools had to apply their capacity for knowledge utilisation. It has been claimed that schools cannot learn until there is an explicit or implicit agreement about what they know about their students, about when and how teaching and learning occurs, and about how to change (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1999; Louis, 1998). In an ideal setting, schools draw from three sources to create a shared knowledge base: individual knowledge, knowledge created by them, and knowledge sought from others. The individual knowledge at the four schools and the opportunities that staff had to share it, were already described. The 'knowledge sought from others' was partly discussed by relating to teachers taking part in extra-mural courses which usually, according to their accounts, had limited influence on their practice. The Meytzav reports that include information about students at the schools and to some extent teachers' perceptions of the school might be also categorized as 'knowledge sought from others' – although a Meytzav report is an external source of '*information*', and is not '*knowledge*'. The fact that the information in it is based on data that was collected at the school makes it more than a collection of facts or disconnected information. One way of developing sophisticated knowledge utilisation might have been the socially constructed frames of reference for thorough and deeper processes of knowledge utilisation.

As was specified in Chapter Two (p. 40-41), professional learning communities might provide these frames of reference. I decided to draw upon Bolam et al's research (2005) into professional learning communities; thus the following table is based on their findings and categorisation. In the table it is possible to observe the extent to which, according to this categorisation, the four schools were professional learning communities and provided the support structures within them.

Table no. 8 – Schools as professional learning communities

Professional Learning Community characteristics	School G	School H	School M	School S	Summary
Shared values and vision	Explicit, very clear			Opportunities to clarify values, beliefs	Schools G and S
Collective responsibility for pupils' learning	Collective responsibility, constantly nurtured	Collective responsibility, constantly nurtured	Each teacher is responsible for her own class.	Collective responsibility, constantly nurtured	Schools G, H and S
Collaboration focused on learning	In small groups accompanied by external instructors. Whole-staff forums, too.	In small groups accompanied by external and internal instructors. Whole-staff forums.	Mainly in small groups. Some external instructors. Whole-staff forum is rare.	In small groups instructed mainly by internal instructors. One external instructor. Frequent whole-staff forums.	Existed in all schools, different expression.
Group as well as individual professional learning	Existed - sharing new information	Existed - sharing new information, mainly subject areas.	Mainly individual professional learning. The group's time was dedicated for monitoring.	Existed - sharing new information perceptions and values.	The deepest at school S. Not much of group learning at school M.
Reflective professional enquiry	Was carried out in the frame of Meytzav. Less so in other areas.	Was carried out within the frame of school evaluation	Did not exist.	Was carried out within the frame of school evaluation	Schools S and H within the frame of school self-evaluation. Restricted at school G. Did not exist at school M.
Openness, networks and partnerships	Teachers indicated openness and transparency	A culture of openness	Fragmented	The reflective inquiry demanded openness	Existed in schools S, H and G. Partnerships were not significant.
Inclusive membership	The head teacher was very proud of her inclusive policy	All teachers are partners	All teachers are partners in their small groups	All teachers are partners	School M – existed only in small groups.
Mutual trust, respect and support	The emphasis is on support. The head teacher and colleagues. Limited trust and respect.	The emphasis is on trust among all. Head teacher and teachers feel supported.	Teachers feel supported by their colleagues.	The emphasis is on respect among all. Teachers feel supported by colleagues and by the head teacher.	G – Support. Limited trust and respect. M – Teachers' support. H – Trust and support. S – Respect and support.

Overall, it is possible to see that in all four schools there were socially constructed frames of reference, more developed at two of them (schools S and H). The deepest processes of self-evaluation and professional learning of the group took place at school S. Referring to the selected categorisation one of the schools (school M) lacked many characteristics of a professional learning community. In the fourth case (school G) there was a lack of respect and trust, and there were limited processes of reflective inquiry. This, again, may have increased the manifestation of the head teacher's control and power exerted by her. It is possible to suggest that most of the schools built in themselves into professional learning communities to a higher or lower extent.

Harris and Lambert (2003) describe the 'Improving school' as a

'Professional learning community involved in self-regulated change.... They are actively involved in the process of self-renewal' they claim, 'but select areas for development and change very carefully. They do not simply respond in a 'knee-jerk' way to external demands but use external change for their own internal improvement purposes. They provide opportunities for teachers to work together but create a balance between internally generated and externally imposed change' (p.29).

All three schools (schools G, S and H) might each serve as an example of that claim, but each represents this to a different extent. While two (schools H and G) were mainly involved in initiatives that would make the school improve in the subsequent external evaluation process (one with its own agenda and the other taking on the external agenda), an internal agenda was set to balance the externally imposed procedure in the third case (school S). This could well illustrate the description made by Fullan (2000) *where a school can selectively initiate, integrate, and co-ordinate innovations into its own focused programmes*. But Harris and Lambert add that: *'...there is a feeling of energy and enthusiasm within these schools but a real danger of 'burn-out' as levels of activity may be too high (p.29)*. While we have to be careful in accepting the external report information as such, this might be the case in two of the schools (schools S and G) where the third report showed a decline in teachers' motivation.

To conclude the aspect of teachers' learning, it is evident that the school that had more of the features of a professional learning community was the one applying more sophisticated ways of knowledge utilisation. However, teachers had difficulties in transferring new knowledge from any source and incorporating this knowledge in a way that actually had an impact on their practice. Although the special nature of the information in the report has a better potential for becoming a tool for learning at schools, how well it is used depends on the aspects of the school described above, which are connected to the school's capacity for knowledge utilisation.

The following chapter pulls together the conclusions of the research. It starts by touching on the conditions of capacity for knowledge utilisation that appear to be necessary for a school to make the best use of external evaluation information. It is thus about the knowledge created by schools, and examines the extent to which the researched schools were knowledge generators. In these two last statements the underlying assumption is that knowledge creation, or knowledge generation, is the best way of using external evaluation information. The reason for this is that knowledge that is created on site is contextual, combining teachers' practical knowledge with the new information and facilitating the development of ownership and control and ultimately the implementation of the newly generated knowledge.

Thereafter general conclusions of this study will be presented and its further implications will be suggested.

Conclusions and implications

The first finding of this study was that schools do use new information that they receive. However, their motivation to use it and the way they use it varies according to the unique context of each school. The best outcomes were achieved when schools used it to address their own issues concerning better and more thorough self-evaluation, therefore enhancing their capacity for knowledge utilisation. The results were less satisfactory when schools addressed intermittent issues and wrote an action plan, but were not always aware of the rationale behind their motivation or simply their reasons for doing it.

The external evaluation procedure in Israel does not incorporate any sanctions, nor does it allow for explicit accountability issues. It is defined as *'an aid to management for school principal and teachers. Its main aim is to aid school staff in making data-based decisions, in order to use resources wisely and to improve school functioning'*³². Therefore the different motivation of schools to use the external evaluation is a matter for inquiry. Some of this has already been presented in the literature review, and it has been reinforced by the findings of the current study. This study has focused specifically on the use that head teachers made of external evaluation for different purposes, the way participants perceived the external evaluation procedure, and the place that the report had to take on their school agenda. Leadership, and mainly the leadership of head teachers, has emerged in the findings as a key issue. In some cases, there was a tacit or explicit expectation from external bodies (such as: local inspectors or the local communities) that schools would refer to the report. However, the extent and the method of using the information stayed in the hands of the school itself, and in the first place in the hands of the head teacher who was 'the person at the gate'.

While trying to uncover schools' reasons for using the new information it was possible within this study to establish that in most of the schools teachers' reactions to the external evaluation procedure and its report became more sophisticated over time.

³² Retrieved at 17th July 2006 from <http://cms.education.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres>

Consequently, although they still had reservations and criticism, they were able to come to terms with the report and were willing to use its findings, and not ‘throw out the baby with the bath water’.

The first part of the following conclusions section presents the conditions which were found to be necessary for a sophisticated procedure of knowledge utilisation at schools. I would like to argue that these conditions are the substance of a school’s capacity for knowledge utilisation and might become fertile ground for a school’s capacity to improve. None of the conditions stands on its own. It is a complicated combination of them that can provide the ideal setting for knowledge utilisation and, further, for the capacity of the school to improve. These conditions have already been discussed in previous sections and will be only mentioned here as part of the argument.

As specified in the Methodology chapter (p. 59), since this research referred to a contemporary phenomenon within a ‘real life’ context, the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context were not clearly evident, just as in real life. The research begins at the world of action and contributes to it (Bassey, 1999). The general conclusions presented in the last part of this chapter includes the intensity of knowledge utilisation and the possible reasons for it, as well as the impact these processes of knowledge utilisation had on the different schools. The implications of this study belong to the ‘real’ world as well as to research. Therefore follow-up actions are suggested in the last section as well as issues for further research.

Conditions that are required for conducting sophisticated knowledge utilisation at schools

Condition 1: Distributed, transformational leadership.

Within the frame of the current study leadership styles in schools were reflected in the educational perceptions of the head teacher, the extent to which teachers took part in decision-making and were involved in schools as a whole system and committed to it, and in the part that the SMT played in the school’s life.

In Chapter Two it was claimed that transformational leadership was usually manifested in a policy of systematic innovation that might be introduced by intellectual stimulation, while at the same time the individual consideration was not neglected (Louis Seashore 1995; Stoll 1999; Leithwood 2000). The individual consideration is presented in the next section. In the case of the current study, the Meytzav report might well be the stimulation for innovation; however, despite the fact that all the schools received the report, most of them were hardly innovative. Only one of the schools could be perceived as innovative. At the same school the head teacher was trying to find ways to promote teachers' leadership that might result in a broad-based involvement; she facilitated a *skilful involvement* (Harris & Lambert, 2003, p.30) and was ready to take risks and to challenge existing structures and routines. She also used '*invitational*' messages (Stoll and Fink, 1996) to highlight teachers' abilities and responsibilities, as well as to develop their sense of being worthwhile (see also condition no. 2). In another school, the head teacher explicitly encouraged teachers' leadership; teachers took part in decision-making, their involvement and their sharing of responsibility were important to the head teacher, and she sought ways to constantly enhance and improve these attributes.

However, as in many other phenomena in the field of schooling, the issue of transformational, distributed leadership is not straightforward. In the case of the current research although the attributes of these styles of leadership could be recognized in other cases, they did not always reflected a genuine approach. Where the distributed leadership was conditional, even though teachers' abilities were highlighted and responsibilities were distributed, it all depended on their ability to toe the party line. So although leadership was shared, with many people having responsibilities at the school and being consulted frequently, trust and respect were not always part of it. In all cases the type of leadership influenced the capacity for knowledge utilisation at the school, its sophistication and its depth. But when we try to identify which type of leadership this is in any one case, it becomes clear that it is its meaning for the people involved, the contextual meaning, which is the pivotal point.

Condition 2: Teachers' feeling of worth and their emotional well-being

The place of teachers' feelings in their work and the place of emotional well-being in a school's life were discussed in Chapter Two. To mention only two points: Stoll et al. (2003) claimed that *'it is clear that emotion and learning have a powerful relationship'*and that *'in order to build the right climate for learning it is critical to handle the complexities of emotional life'* (p. 164). Concerning the process of change, Hargreaves et al. (2001) claim that *'changes are both intellectual and emotional'*.

For teachers to have a feeling of worth and a sense of emotional well-being there needs to be a balance of conditions that depend on external forces as well as on internal relationships. Recent trends within the Israeli educational system suggest that there is movement towards an imbalance of the required conditions, preventing the development of a situation where teachers' emotional well-being can be sustained. The educational system seems to be reiterating its demand for accountability by, among other procedures, implementing the national evaluation. The public voice is predominantly cynical about teachers, placing them under harsh scrutiny but offering them neither communal respect nor material benefit. Thus internal relationships within schools and efforts to take care of teachers' emotional well-being gain further importance.

From the findings of this study it is clear that any exploration of the conditions for an effective and sophisticated knowledge utilisation must refer to the contextual nuances. While all head teachers understood the importance of their staff's emotional well-being, they took care of it in different ways. In one case the head teacher encouraged a sense of 'whole-system' work so as to make teachers feel involved and not threatened. This attitude resulted in teachers feeling that their school was a place 'to hear and to be heard'. In another case the emotional well-being of staff was taken care of as long as staff acted in accordance with the head teacher's beliefs, ideas and perceptions.

It is possible to conclude that, although acknowledging the importance of teachers' well-being in carrying out successful, sophisticated processes at a school, a declared pursuit of this idea does not necessarily reflect the reality there.

Condition 3: A significant number of staff members take part in real ‘whole-school’ processes; a ‘whole-school’ approach is apparent.

The more staff members are continually involved in ‘whole-school’ activities, the more they gain ownership of the information, and the process gives them *‘a feeling of worth and value’* (Huberman, 1990). Their sense of responsibility might also be enhanced. This condition was well understood by all head teachers and consequently most staff members were involved in discussions concerning the new knowledge. It is still important to differentiate between real sharing and discussion while listening to the teachers’ voice versus other cases, where it was only about learning how to toe the party line, or using triggering events to dictate to the staff how they should think and behave. The extent and the scope of involvement in the researched cases was also a result of different patterns of communication (see conditions no. 4 and 7). Nevertheless, although in this study the ‘whole-school’ approach was apparent in most cases in each case it took a different contextual shade. These different shades have to be taken into consideration when employing processes of knowledge utilisation.

Condition 4: Opportunities for sharing the staff’s knowledge, perceptions and beliefs and making them explicit.

Because *‘most teachers feel more comfortable starting with their own knowledge’*, the way they understand *‘the changes that face them, and the impact of change on their ideas, beliefs, emotions, and experiences’* is crucial for successful knowledge utilisation (Hargreaves et al, 2001, p.117). This is the reason to take account of staff’s perception of the evaluation processes, of the report and of its impact on the school.

It might be that the fact that Meytzav does not include recommendations makes it easier for staff members to ‘listen’ to it, as the interpretation of the findings stays in their hands. The sophistication of the interpretation, however, depends on other conditions. In most cases the teachers’ existing knowledge, perceptions and beliefs were not an issue for discussion and stayed implicit, which might have reduced the likelihood of a sophisticated knowledge utilisation. Making connections between the two (the new knowledge and teachers’ existing knowledge and beliefs) was left to the teachers’ intuition, and this probably limited their capacity for knowledge utilisation

and for knowledge generation. Moreover, in no case were the underlying educational perceptions and the aims of the external evaluation procedure and its report thoroughly discussed. In all cases it became an existing phenomenon which the staff was supposed to try and understand, and consequently use.

In all four schools the sharing of knowledge, either practical or connected to subject areas, was more common than the sharing of perceptions and beliefs. Only in one case did the process of sharing educational perceptions and beliefs become part of the culture, and consequently trust and mutual respect were established. This might partly explain why this was the school where a more sophisticated capacity for knowledge utilisation existed, where these discussions produced a sense of direction and staff became more willing and more able to take risks. In this school teachers had opportunities first to explicitly establish their educational perceptions and later to decide which parts of the reports they were willing to use and in what ways. It gave the staff the opportunity for a deeper inquiry into their educational perceptions and beliefs, and consequently they were able to set up their own agenda while being helped by the external information, rather than being carried away by it. They gained control over, and ownership of, the generated knowledge. It is possible to deduce from this that the external information was better embedded in the school's work and better adjusted to that school's needs. Moreover, as another consequence of the initial process, the staff at that school had the capacity to set their own criteria for self-evaluation, not only to use the external criteria. The externally provided information triggered the carrying out of further processes at the school. These processes depended on the school's capacity for knowledge utilisation, and at the same time enhanced their capacity to improve. They did not only share knowledge and use it; they generated contextual knowledge. This may suggest that unless teachers inquire into their own reality and set their own agenda by generating new contextual knowledge relying, among other things, on the externally provided information, a significant improvement will not take place.

Within the context of implementation, it was found that the pace of implementation does not necessarily correlate with its quality.

Condition 5: Similarities between the new information and the way staff perceive the reality of the school.

This study confirms the claim made by researchers that the more the new information is consistent with the way staff perceive their school, the more they are likely to use it (Datnow, 2000). The following two cases are examples of this point from both ends of the spectrum. The first example shows that where the staff perceived the school's reality and the information given in the report as very similar, they were able to use some of the findings already from the first report. In another case, where the staff has found dissimilarity between the report's findings and their own perception of the school's reality, teachers did not believe that it was possible to get a genuine picture of the school's reality by the external evaluation. A teacher said: *what we do is more important, our daily life, and not the report...We know our students. We see them everyday and every hour. We don't need an external body to evaluate them.* This point of view postponed the staff ability to assign credibility to the findings and consequently to use the information in it.

On the continuum between rejecting the information of the report and accepting it as similar to the reality they knew, confronted with the information, teachers and head teachers tried to find reasons for the differences between their perceptions of the reality and the information given in the report. For example, according to the information in the external report, in most schools the expectations of teachers from their students had lessened during the three years. One of the head teachers gave her own explanation for a different reality using rationalisation as a psychological defence mechanism. She said: *Nonetheless, the fact that teachers were trying to improve and did not give up proved that they had high expectations from their students.* In another case, teachers explained the same finding by the fact that they had become more professional and as a result had concerns about students' achievements, whereas the head teacher tried to explain it by the (technical) fact that many new teachers had joined the staff that year. By this she indicated that once time had passed expectations would rise again, maybe because this was the explicit expectation from all. In this case although the teachers seemed to demonstrate improved professionalism, the head teacher preferred to offer a technical explanation for this finding. The way both head

teacher and teachers explained the reasons for this finding will probably influence the extent and the way they were about to use it.

Condition 6: The school's state of readiness

If 'readiness is fundamental for getting started in any improvement initiative' then the different stages of readiness at the different schools require the external evaluation process to take account of it. Currently, the state of readiness of the schools is at no stage the concern of the external body that carries out the evaluation. Consequently no variations are applied in the external process. If, for example, the motivation to use the report originates from the will to appease those who are more powerful, in the conflict between internal and external forces, then the report loses its potential to be an aid for school improvement.

There is a danger built into this situation: if no attention is given to a school's state of readiness, the potential underlying resistance, whether explicit (in the best case) or implicit (in the worst), can derail any initiative for improvement. Even though at the explicit level there were substantial developments at all schools, apparently in cases where readiness was limited, the change, if indeed there was one, would be instrumental and superficial, and probably short-lived.

Condition 7: A suitable dissemination procedure, adequate to both the provided information and the setting, including opportunities to carry out an open and thorough inquiry into the new knowledge.

All too often people who provide data to schools assume that teachers know what to do with it, but until this data is interpreted, it does not become useable knowledge (Louis 1994; Watkins 1995).

Some forms of educational knowledge will spread with only minimal effort at dissemination, but this is not the case with a Meytzav report. It might be due to its features, such as the report's structure or its comprehensiveness, or to the features of the setting, such as the way participants perceive the process of collecting the data. Whatever the reason dissemination efforts need to become more systematic and schools should get more opportunities to 'decode' the language of the document

(Hargreaves, 2001), so that in best cases, staff can give the information of the document a local meaning, making it contextual and relevant to their needs.

It was discussed earlier that dissemination processes varied among the schools. In all four schools the dissemination processes changed over time, usually to become more sophisticated, and to engage an increasing number of staff members with the findings. However, some participants in this study sought more systematic policy interventions – as one teacher said: *‘A professional representative has to deliver the report, not just ‘throw’ it at the school and leave it there. They have to explain, to show us that they are not against us. This is the only way I can learn from this report.’* She, as did others, referred to the emotional as well as to the intellectual and pragmatic levels of engagement with the findings.

The external evaluation procedure does not include any legislation or norm that relates to the dissemination procedures. The school is autonomous; it is left alone to decide on the methods of interpretation, if any. The responsibility for knowledge utilisation stays in the hands of schools, a fact that should reduce teachers’ resistance and result in a greater level of reinvention (Davies, 2000). In fact, teachers’ resistance to the reports at all four schools had lessened over the years, but it seems that their level of reinvention was dependent on other conditions existing at the schools, as mentioned above, and that it varied among them. Dissemination efforts were fully dependent on local initiatives, local ideas, and on the components of the school culture, such as structure and time, patterns of communication, and the style of leadership within them. Connections could be traced among these attributes and the processes of dissemination and use of the findings. Initially, it was the head teacher’s abilities and perceptions that set the frame for these activities. Thus there was still the question, who should be the distributor and what might be the best way, if there is one, of carrying out the distribution?

‘....research knowledge generated outside is only one source of knowing, and its use must be negotiated’ (Weiss, 1981; 1991). This claim can be adapted to the case of the external reports. The head teachers became the ‘negotiators’ of the new information usually helped by their SMT, to a lesser extent with the first report and to a greater extent with the subsequent ones. It can be assumed that head teachers and their SMT

were experts on the context, the setting, and were in a powerful position to use pressure and support to influence teachers in using the provided data (depending on their own beliefs and values). But what made them experts at reading the information and interpreting it? Apparently in schools where more staff were involved in reading and interpreting, which are parts of the dissemination procedure, and where leadership was distributed among teachers, these processes became more effective.

Leaving the dissemination procedure solely in the hands of local staff might end up as producing no improvement at all, particularly if the change has been externally initiated. If staff patterns of dissemination are not challenged and are not adjusted according to the type of new information brought in, the new information might eventually turn out to be not clear enough and not usable. Moreover, in the case of Meytzav who do not include any sanctions or further examination of the effectiveness of the external process itself or any consequent steps taken by schools, the extent to which a school develops its capacity for knowledge utilisation remains unclear and intuitive.

If, as has been argued, dissemination is important, and an effort must be made to improve it and make it more effective, then an examination of the structures and procedures used at the school to share information could provide material on which to base a plan for an improved process of dissemination.

However, a sophisticated dissemination procedure, though inevitable, does not necessarily lead to a sophisticated implementation.

The optimum setting for knowledge utilisation, one which could develop the capacity of the school to improve, must be seen as something complex, a complicated combination of the interdependent conditions which already exist. Such conditions were the main ones suggested by the findings of this study but, as was acknowledged in the text, recognising their existence in any school is not a straightforward practice. One has to be cautious not to fall into the net of an 'empty box', a *karaoke*, where all kinds of meaning and interpretations are possible (Hargreaves et al., 2001, p. 3). Not less important is the identification of the deep motivations and the contextual meaning

of each, before one can draw conclusions and suggest or follow up implications for action.

General Conclusions

The longitudinal nature of the study

This study adopted a longitudinal approach in examining the relationships among in-school attributes, and between these attributes and externally provided information, over a period of three years. The research covered three cycles of external evaluation within three successive years for each school, while putting an emphasis on the resulting processes at schools rather than the external evaluation itself. Consequently, it became possible to relate to each school's capacity for knowledge utilisation within a time perspective, and this, *inter alia*, is demonstrated in the following sections.

The use of the findings

The report, which is the source of information in this study is comprised of a very small amount of text, and the information in it is mainly presented in tables, graphs and numbers. It gives the impression of being a very accurate measure, which presents user-friendly information to those directly involved and to those outside the school. The findings of this study lead to the conclusion that, over the three years, and after coming to terms, sooner or later, with the external procedure (and realising that it is there to stay), a considerable number of teachers were able to perceive the report as professional and valid. In a few cases they also realised that it had potential to become a part of an overall long-term plan for school improvement. This could only happen in those schools where, firstly, staff was ready to recognise its potential, and secondly, where self-inquiry was part of that school's culture and staff had opportunities to discuss the findings. Procedures of SE offered the externally provided information with a contextual shade and gave the staff involved some control over what was happening. If the information in the report was to take a developmental role, knowledge had to be generated on the school site by a consultation with the school's members. This also required corresponding attributes in that school's leadership.

In conclusion, three kinds of capacity for knowledge utilisation had been observed:

The capacity to *share* new knowledge,

The capacity to *use* new knowledge,

And the capacity to *generate* new knowledge

Each kind of capacity is built on the previous one. Generating new knowledge cannot be accomplished without using knowledge which, in turn, cannot be carried out as an institutional matter without sharing knowledge. The capacity to share knowledge is the most fundamental among the three.

Sharing knowledge was a common reality for most schools in this study. The participants from these schools claimed that communication structures, openness and transparency had improved sooner or later, due to the external evaluation procedure, including its subsequent report and the processes carried out subsequently at schools. This component of schools' capacity for knowledge utilisation had gradually developed over the three-year period of the research.

As mentioned above, the information in the report was presented in a readable manner. However, we have to be careful not to forget to measure other indicators of schooling that the local community perceived as important: '*we must learn to measure what we value rather than valuing what we can easily measure* (Education Counts; an indicator system to monitor the nation's health, Report to US Congress, 1992 in MacBeath et al, 1996 p. 11). One way of doing this might be to develop of tools for self-evaluation of schools, as has happened in some of the researched case studies. At the moment, in Israel, this is still left to schools' initiative and motivation. If there are any initial attempts, made by the state, to implement SE, it stays within the same framework of the topics for evaluation.

Preparing for the external procedure of evaluation, and making the effort to succeed in it, takes time and energy. Every initiative that is not related to the external evaluation scheme might be suspiciously scrutinized. In some cases, schools actually drop those

topics of the curriculum which are not checked by the external evaluation. This might result in a reduction of school's curriculum and, even worse than that, schools giving up working on their own priorities and aims. In the case of this study, school G might be an example of that. Some of the conditions which were mentioned above, as aspects that contribute to the school capacity to improve, existed at that school. Therefore, in theory, they would have been able to carry out effective processes for improvement, but the role that they (mainly the head teacher) designated for the report was different from that in other schools, and this was one of the reasons that their use of the report stayed restricted. As well as fulfilling her aspirations for success and high standards, it was carried out within the framework of the head teacher's aspiration to prove to school members, as well as to external elements, that the paradigm connecting the socio-economic level with the students' academic achievements had to be broken. So the students' achievements in the next report would probably improve, the school thus gaining 'test wisdom' but losing those parts of its curriculum which were not being examined by the external procedure. School G definitely did not evaluate what mattered to them, or at least did it in a very restricted, externally defined frame; rather they evaluated 'what values' in external terms, using the 'fidelity approach to change' (Fullan, 2001).

If the intention is to improve the work of a school, the staff at some stage has to inquire its context in order to better define areas where they have to improve within a certain period of time, and thus be able to decide on their priorities. Only then can they recruit the relevant information for their own needs and work on combining this new information with their current knowledge, i.e. generate new knowledge for their further practice. Therefore, where aspects that contribute to the school's capacity for knowledge utilisation were more spread and of higher standards, schools were better positioned in the long run to enhance their capacity to improve.

In this frame of reference the following topics stand out as the ones that require further research: the incentives that motivate a school to get involved in processes of self-evaluation, the attributes of the external evaluation that inhibit schools' ability/motivation to carry out these processes, and possible ways to overcome these inhibitions. It would also be important to explore the means by which the external

evaluation might help support schools, and thus provide them with a deeper level and more sophisticated methods for their self-inquiry.

The impact on schools

At schools where staff described the report as having a significant impact on the school, the first impact was usually technical. Later, it influenced the way they worked at the school. Only at the last stage did it influence their educational perceptions. Cousins and Leithwood (1986) claim that utilisation can be perceived as a continuum (see Chapter Two, p. 17 for details). If 'real' improvement is intended to transform the 'culture' of schools, then 'single-loop' (Schon and Argyris, 1978) or 'new knowledge that is brought to bear within an existing culture' (Simon 1991) would not be enough to carry it out, let alone to sustain it.

The longitudinal nature of the current study made it possible to suggest a refinement of these observations. It presents the above continuum in a time dimension: in most cases the instrumental knowledge utilisation was the first to be applied, but when time passed and schools gained experience, and in some cases even became more expert at using the external information, the instrumental developed into the conceptual. For example, in all schools human capital was enlarged in order to be able to teach in small groups; later, teachers realised that teaching in small groups facilitated their ability to become more aware of, and more responsive to each child's needs, and consequently it enhanced students' achievements.

If we wish to improve schools' capacity for knowledge utilisation, a mechanism should be set up (as a combination of internal staff and the external support system) through which to identify aspects that contribute to this. All parties working through this mechanism would decide together what components of capacity for knowledge utilisation are missing at a school and furthermore what they would have to do in order to be able to improve that school's capacity. Within the current study it has been established that capacity for knowledge utilisation is enhanced by using the external information, mainly in those schools where more of the conditions that contribute to this capacity already existed. There is a need for an external 'negotiator' (a 'critical friend') who works together with the staff to facilitate a more sophisticated reading of

the report and at the same time helps to determine the school's priorities. This should influence the scope of engagement with the findings, and the consequent processes, that should be carried out at the school. The staff is the expert on the context (the school's strengths, its deficiencies, micro-politics at the school and so on), while the external person, clearly someone knowledgeable and experienced in the educational field, should be the expert on the text, and the procedure of external evaluation.

The issue of leadership and power

It was never the intention of this study to examine the nature of power and the relationship between power and learning as such. However, the issue of leadership and power has emerged from the data as a key issue, including head teachers' manipulation of power in making use of the evaluation procedures. The findings suggest that head teachers use power in different ways, ways probably connected to their beliefs, their personality, the way they perceive relationships among people, and the way they perceive the place of the external report in their school life. A related issue is the question of power imposed on the head teacher and how the balance between responsibility and accountability is struck. The influence of the individual (the head teacher) and the influence of the system or the circumstances, and the contribution of each to schooling is another issue for further research.

The issue of improvement

While researching the issue of a school's capacity for knowledge utilisation, it became evident that this may serve as one building block of that school's capacity to improve. The main question of the research 'What does a school's use of external evaluation information imply about its capacity to improve?' includes the issue of improvement. The implications of this study for a school's capacity to improve depend on the definition of 'improvement'. The focus should be on how 'improvement' is defined. In this context, improvement will be regarded as a continuum with no improvement at one extreme and 'real' improvement that intends to transform the 'culture' of a school at the other. For example, in one school improvement might be represented by better scores in students' achievements in the subsequent external evaluation, whereas in another school there will be an effort to transform and improve aspects of the school's culture. In the latter, the improvement

will be the consequence of a process that includes a deep inquiry of staff into their own practice, into cognitive, affective and organisational procedures, which culminates by drawing specific conclusions for that specific school. Moreover, the difference between sharing new knowledge and generating new knowledge has implications for the level and especially the type of improvement at a school. The closer it is to knowledge generation, the better will be the capacity of that school to improve.

In summary, my interest in this study originated from the post I held in the Ministry of Education Evaluation Department. A basic requirement of the Ministry of Education is that each school has to set up its own aims and priorities, while the evaluation process is external. Through carrying out this study it has become clear that not all schools 'keep' their own aims and priorities, that they are in danger of 'straightening up' according to the terms of the scheme determined by the external evaluation process. In order to keep their own agenda within the current external pressures, certain conditions that contribute to the school capacity for knowledge utilisation have to exist. While a great deal of work is being done, and considerable resources are being invested, in the external scheme for evaluation, nobody monitors to what extent the results presented in the evaluation report are taken on board to improve practice in schools, or indeed whether schools have the capacity to make the best use of their evaluation reports – and if not, what should be done in order to improve their capacity for knowledge utilisation.

If Meytzav really intends to help schools improve, and to become *a tool for schools to improve*, the external procedure has to take into consideration the differences among schools and give them the opportunity to work with the findings/information, supplying, when needed, the resources to support them; it needs to establish ways to enhance communication with schools and to find ways to help them in their knowledge utilisation processes. Through the process of answering the questions presented at the beginning of this study, it has become clear that the report's findings are taken on board for different reasons, with varying motivation, according to the unique circumstances of each school. "Evaluation utilisation" does take place, but its characteristics, its sophistication, does not depend on the report's features or content; it rather depends on the existence of those aspects that are connected to teachers'

learning, and especially their capacity for knowledge utilisation. This capacity can be enhanced if a school is aware of it, is motivated to improve it and has the resources to carry out the improvement. Using the report under the specified conditions offers a means of improving the school's capacity for knowledge utilisation and hence bring about a real change, ultimately promoting the school's capacity to improve.

This study, then, while confirming the potential embedded in external reports for school improvement, claims that this is not enough, that the issue is not the external evaluation procedure as such, but the schools' capacity for knowledge utilisation.

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Appendix no. 1: "Improvement through Inspection" – England, New Zealand and Israel

	England – Ofsted (Starting in 1993 – updated 5 times, last version operates from March 2005: more proportionate approach, more emphasis on SE)	New Zealand – ERO Education Review Office (Starting in 1989)**	Israel – Meyzav (Starting on March 2000 – the measures and the report were modified several times).
The body in charge of the external inspection/evaluation	A non-ministerial government department headed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. It is independent of the Department for Education and Skills.	A government department headed by a Chief Executive Officer appointed by the government.	A department at the Ministry of Education headed by an appointed person.
Aims	To provide an external evaluation of the quality and standards of the school. Promoting a culture of rigorous self- evaluation and improvement. Evaluating school's capacity to monitor and evaluate its own progress towards its priorities and targets.	ERO seeks to improve the quality of education through review and evaluation, and reports publicly on the quality of education. It helps in the design, implementation and review of policy. In 2001 ERO moved to a review and assist model – advice to schools on how to improve where concerns were identified.	To provide a description according to a set indicators. A tool for the head teacher and the professional community, to plan and to set priorities.
Frequency	Every six years*[maximum] 'proportional to need'.	About every three – four years	Every two years (in summer 2006 the frequency has changed to be conducted every four years).
Topics of evaluation	Educational standards, the quality of education (pupils values, attitude and personal development, teaching and learning, quality of curriculum, care guidance and support), the quality of leadership and management. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. How effective is the school and	The quality of education, safety of the students, and the performance of schools and of the managing body (including the schools Board of trustees) in providing education services. Curriculum leadership, curriculum implementation. Providing adequate premises, personnel management, school's strategic planning.	School's organisation and management, the pedagogical and general environment, students' achievements, students' and teachers' perceptions of school. Computer skills, ways of instruction and modes of assessment.

The evaluator/inspector	<p>why?</p> <p>A team of independent inspectors, trained for the task and working to a contract. Each team is led by a Registered Inspector and required to include a 'lay' person who has no personal experience in teaching or management of a school. Inspectors are allocated to a team by contractors on the basis of their phase, specialist subject knowledge, special educational needs and English as an additional language.</p>	<p>The chief executive of ERO is the Chief Review Officer, who formally designates individual review officers she has approximately 120 review officers in nine district offices and a Maori Review Unit.</p>	<p>Untrained, hired people for the task, who carries out the process according to prescribed instructions.</p>
Who is being evaluated?	<p>All schools, childcare centers, colleges, LEAs, initial teacher training.</p>	<p>All schools and Early childhood centres (2 to 18 year olds). Current education policy and practice. (around 2650 schools and 3000 early childhood centres)</p>	<p>All elementary and junior high schools</p>
Time duration of the evaluation/inspection	<p>About one week – the inspection team attends the school. Basic allocation based on size of the school with additions for special features of the school.</p>	<p>Typically a 3 day school visit. Schools are advised of the visit in advance and areas of focus are negotiated with the school also in advance.</p>	<p>A week of exams and five months of interviews' and questionnaires' distribution. At the day of the exam examiners attend the class in order to keep an eye on students' work. No other visits to schools.</p>
Measures	<p>Reading documents, lesson observation, teachers' interviews, analysis of pupils work, meetings with parents, pupils, and governors.</p>	<p>Look at some selected data (self review processes, analysis of data, and reporting of data to community and parents), lesson observation, teachers' and pupils' interviews and discussions with governors and principals.</p>	<p>Phone interviews with the teachers and with the head, students' questionnaires for the ages of 10–14, and performance exams in four subject matters for the 5th and 8th grade.</p>
Preparations	<p>The inspection methods Ofsted uses are developed in consultation with those who are affected by them. They are governed by a handbook, which give</p>	<p>The detailed issues for review are determined following a discussion between the ERO review team and the board of trustees and reading documentations</p>	<p>No formal external preparation. Before launching the scheme of evaluation Headteachers had some sessions to explain them the new scheme. In several cases</p>

	<p>detailed guidance to inspectors on how to conduct an inspection.</p> <p>Benchmarks graded for each aspect inspected. The school provides self-evaluation documentation and LEA monitoring documents.</p> <p>Following the analysed pupils' questionnaires meeting with parents, staff, governors and some pupils are conducted. The headteacher and chair of governing body are provided with a pre-inspection commentary.</p>	<p>provided by the school. This discussion focused on existing information held by the school (including student achievement and self-review information) and the extent to which potential issues for review contributed to the achievement of the students.</p>	<p>school's staff conducts non-formal preparation: they train the students by using similar pattern performance exams.</p>
The report			
Content	<p>Qualitative. Includes a detailed commentary on the strengths and weaknesses of all aspects of the schedule.</p> <p>Identification of what the school needs to do to improve, in priority order.</p>	<p>Qualitative, evaluative includes recommendations – areas for improvement. Actions – serious issues for immediate action – schools' strengths and weaknesses, a detailed schedule and actions to improve.</p>	<p>A brief description of what the report holds. Three main parts: the pedagogical environment; learning setting characteristics, students' achievements and teachers' expectations, school environment and the school as a working space. The information is presented by graphs and tables, recommendations are not included.</p>
The audience	<p>A brief interim verbal report of the corporate judgements of the team is given by the Registered Inspector to the head teacher on the last day of the inspection followed by a detailed oral report to the senior management and a briefer oral report to the governing body. The school is provided with a draft report to check for factual accuracy. The school</p>	<p>Parents, teachers, managers, trustees, at the individual school level. Providing a resource for education policy and decision makers at national level, for teacher training and for the academic research communities. The reports are on ERO's website, open to the public.</p>	<p>The school's head teacher and the school's inspector.</p>

	<p>makes the inspection report a public document by providing parents with the summary within ten working days of receipt.</p> <p>The reports are on OFSTED's website.</p>		
Following actions required	<p>School management has to write an action plan to which the Governors are responsible. Governors are required to report annually to parents the progress made with their OFSTED action plan. When a school has serious weaknesses or requires special measures a copy of the Action Plan should also be sent to OFSTED.</p> <p>Recently, OFSTED announced that they will now be maintaining much more regular contact with inspected schools and providing them with practical advice about what they must do in order to improve (OFSTED,2004).</p>	<p>Where serious concerns are identified the school is put on a supplementary review cycle which is typically every 6 months until the concerns are addressed by the school. Also ERO may at its discretion request an action plan from the school and will monitor this plan.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education also monitors the ERO reviews and where schools have serious weaknesses ERO will work with the school to address the issues.</p>	<p>School's staff members and/or SMT prepare an action plan, which is presented to the local inspector. This plan is the foundation for next year's school based curriculum.</p>
Sanctions and awards	<p>Schools are ranked according to their report. From: effective schools who will be inspected every six years to 'schools causing concern'. These schools are monitored every six to eight months. *</p>	<p>Where ERO sees a school is in serious trouble (serious risk to students, very poor curriculum devliery or the viability of the on-going functioning of the schools is at risk) then it brings the issues to the attention of the Ministry of Education who can introduce a statutory intervention (replace the board or trustees, principal, or senior staff for short or long periods).</p>	<p>No sunctions or awards</p>
Report is provided	<p>The final version of a written report within six weeks of the end of the inspection.</p>	<p>The 'unconfirmed' report is written and sent to the school within four</p>	<p>Within 7-8 months.</p>

		<p>weeks. The board or management committee then has three weeks to write back to ERO with comments on the report findings. After any comments have been considered, the report is then 'confirmed'. ERO does not make the report public for a further two weeks after the report is confirmed.</p>	
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* Depending on the severity of the problems found schools are ranked as: a) serious weaknesses b) special measures and c) underachieving

a. The inspectors may judge that there are Serious Weaknesses in the schools performance and make detailed recommendations in their report. The school will be closely monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) for a period after the inspection; to assess if it is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues in the Action Plan. The local education authority (LEA) is also required to state what action it intends to take to support the school in overcoming its difficulties. If the problems are not resolved the HMI may decide the school needs to go into Special Measures.

b. The inspectors may judge that the problems found are of such a severe nature that the school needs to be put into Special Measures immediately. The inspection reports for schools put into Special Measures are different to those for a normal school inspection. They require a detailed plan of action by the school with a timetable for when improvements will be realised. Again the LEA is required to state how it will support the school. The school will be monitored over the next two years and reinspected by HMI. A school that achieves the targets set in its plan is taken out of Special Measures. A school that does not make acceptable progress could be closed by order of the Secretary of State for Education.

c) Underachieving – Such schools may appear to be attaining average or higher standards, but pupils or groups of pupils are not doing as well as they should because

they are not challenged sufficiently; in other words, these schools are coasting. Widespread underachievement is serious and will be a factor in reaching a judgment that the school requires special measures or has serious weaknesses.

** The following report is a citation of a person who is involved with conducting ERO in NZ: In terms of ERO and schools monitoring there are a number of deficiencies in the ERO approach. ERO only review schools every 3 to 4 years and in between times schools can get into serious difficulty. Also ERO reports are textual and not fine grained enough, making measurement of progress or change problematic. In New Zealand currently they have about 400 schools in schooling improvement projects (in clusters of schools or individual schools). In the future we want to get to schools in difficulty as early as possible (at the top of the cliff rather than picking them up at the bottom when they in a serious state). If we can monitor school performance on a more objective basis and more regularly we can reduce those entering schooling improvement (reduce school stress and be a economic benefit to all). The monitoring approach is to measure each school across a number of indicators of which ERO provides key inputs around the measurement of curriculum delivery, school leadership (by principal), and school governance.

www.ero.govt.nz

www.ofsted.co.uk

<http://dmzcms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Rama/MivchaneyMetzavVecho mesh/Meitzav/>

and

***<http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Haaracha/Meitzav/> (a PP presentation, in English)

Summary of table

The NZ and the English evaluation/inspection systems seem to be more similar. The similarity is overt in the following parameters:

The body that is in charge of the evaluation is a non-ministerial government department while the Israeli one is a department, a part of the Ministry of Education (this has only changed during 2005, it is still a governmental body but more independent than previously).

The aims: all systems declare that their aim is to improve the quality of education. The underlying assumptions about what is 'quality of education' and the ways to improve it are at the heart of the differences between the systems. The English system includes self-evaluation, regular monitoring, and school's capacity as part of it. The NZ system uses the process as helping policy decision-making and intervenes in the 'how' and not just the 'what'. The Israeli system perceives the head teacher as the implementer. The evaluation system *provides the tool*, but at the same time the indicators are external; priorities to act upon are set by the school.

The Israeli system was frequently applied until June 2005, now (2006) the frequency is similar to the ERO in NZ. The English system is proportional to need. The themes of evaluation seem to be more general in the Israeli system. The scheme of the Israeli evaluation does not evaluate the curriculum apart from students' achievements. Causal relations are not measured – as they are in the English system – and leadership is barely touched on. School strategic planning (NZ) and the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils (England) is not measured in Israel.

The number of schools that are evaluated in Israel is much smaller.

While the English and NZ systems train their inspectors for the job, the Israeli evaluators are non-professional persons.

Time duration of the inspection is much longer in Israel, but it doesn't include school's visits. Accordingly, there are no meetings, no interviews or observations, and

no reading of school documents or pupils' work. No formal preparation is conducted in Israel.

The report: The English and NZ systems provide the report within a very condensed time-frame. The audience is the whole community and interested parties further afield, being published on the web, while in Israel the head teacher decides with whom s/he would like to share the information. The report in Israel doesn't include recommendations, and carries no sanctions or awards. There is a limited requirement for following actions in Israel: presenting an action plan is the single response demanded. In NZ and England the actions are proportional to needs. (For instance, in NZ ERO works with schools having serious weaknesses, to address the issues of concern).

In general the English and NZ systems are more systemic and have a declared aim of influencing policy. The school takes part in the evaluation/inspection process before, during and after the act itself while in Israel the evaluation is done to a school by external agent who is a messenger of the Ministry of Education. On the other hand the power in the Israeli systems stays in the hand of the head teacher who can decide with whom s/he shares the information. With no categorisation or sanctions it looks as if the school has a greater autonomy.

Appendix no. 2: Meytzav (examples)

The following examples of the questions of student's questionnaire and the statements of teacher's interview grouped according to the headings of the final report.

A heading in the final report – is written hereafter in font 16

A sub-heading in the final report – is written hereafter in an underlined text

Data gathered from teachers' interviews – is written hereafter in font 12

Data gathered from students' questionnaires – is written hereafter in italics

Learning environment

Teachers are supportive and helpful

When I am interested in a subject, teachers help me in their own time.

Teachers give me the feeling that I can succeed.

Teachers always assist me if I need help.

Teachers are taking into consideration the differences between students.

I can progress at my own pace.

Teachers allow me to study in class subjects of my own interest.

Usually we work in groups which are divided according to our level of studies.

Usually we work in groups which are divided according to our subjects of interest.

There is a clear policy for students' evaluation. In this policy there is a variety of ways to evaluate.

There is an arranged procedure for mapping and diagnosing achievements and behaviour in order to draw conclusions and updating the work plan.

I mainly assess my students using alternative ways.

Teachers assess their students by a variety of assessment tools.

Teachers are capable to prepare a subject for teaching in a number of levels.

Feedback is effective and fair.

Teachers explain us the way they grade and evaluate.

Teachers tell me frequently my progress in my studies.

I get the grades I deserve.

Teachers teach in an interesting way.

The studies in school are boring.

Usually I enjoy the work I do in class.

Teachers use a variety of ways to teach.

Teachers interweave learning games, films etc. in their lessons.

We study outside the school, go to museums and field trips.

What is the percentage of the hours per week that you teach in a frontal way _____.

Teachers encourage self-learning.

Teachers instruct us how to investigate a subject: to make assumptions, to collect data, to draw conclusions.

When I have got a problem, teachers instruct me how to solve it myself and do not provide me with the solution immediately.

We have to prepare individual projects.

Teachers teach me how to learn new subjects by myself.

A variety of questions regarding computer skills, use and attitudes of teachers and learners towards this use, are reflected under this heading.

Students' achievements and self learning skills.

Achievements are measured in standard exams, they are not reflected in the questionnaires, so what follows relates to self learning skills.

Need the help of a private tutor.

Memorizing and repeating.

When I study for an exam I revise the material again and again.

When I study for an exam I revise all the material and highlight the important things.

When I finish a task I check it again to be sure I haven't mistaken.

Making effort and initiating.

When I prepare an assignment I write several versions before I am satisfied.

I prepare the non-obligatory exercises.

Even if teachers did not ask us to, I read parts of books.

I am looking for additional learning material.

Planning, gathering and organizing data.

Regularly, I look up for information in books, newspapers or the computer.

When I write an assignment I start with defining the subject and the questions to be investigated.

When I write an assignment I prepare headings for myself.

When I write an assignment I plan my actions (reading, observing).

Critical thinking and capability to analyze

I know how to teach myself a new subject.

When teachers explain something I think about other ways to explain it.

Sometimes I ask myself if what the teachers taught me is right.

Sometimes I suggest ideas that other students did not think about.

Professional development and working environment

Working environment on school level

The head teacher is a pedagogical authority.

School is handled in a good manner.

There is a feeling of 'directing hand'.

Teachers' are consulted in decision making.

I do have influence on what happens at school.

School's aims are clear and possible to implement.

Teamwork at school is effective.

Parents are partners in educational doings.

Working environment for teachers

Teachers are on a high level professionally speaking.

Teachers keep consistency in and between grades.

Teachers have autonomy.

Teachers have motivation.

Professional relationship is good.

Teachers feel burdened and worn out. .

Working environment for students

There is order and borders are clear.

There are good relationships between students.

Students have good relationships with teachers.

Generally students are satisfied with school.

There are teachers who insult.

Students are afraid to attend because of violence.

There are lots of violence incidents. (Many times during this year I was involved in violence incidents)

Many students quarrel in my class.

Appendix no. 3: A letter to head teachers

The state of Israel
Ministry of Education
Evaluation and Assessment Department

1st June 2003

To _____ head teacher,

Your school has been included in a group of schools that took part in the Meytzav 2002. As you know, every primary and junior high school in the country participates in the Maytsav every two years, and the year 2004 is the year that your school repeats the process. We hope that you benefited from the last report as it is the Meytzav's mission to provide a wide range of information on aspects of school life, and the report aims to become a planning tool that might make your work more efficient. The new report that you'll receive will include information on the progress of the school between 2002 and 2004 – information that will give you feedback and will enable more efficient planning for future.

It has come to our attention that in many cases schools acted in a way that disturbed the process and distorted, to an extent, the report that schools received: some schools have prepared the students (that includes buying workbooks of preparation that were not authorized by the Ministry), number of schools have cancelled several classes in order to prepare students for the exams, in various cases teachers have helped the students in their exams or have legitimated copying and in several schools number of "weak" students were excused from the exam.

There is no need to emphasize the un-educational values in these acts. However, it is of great importance for us to stress again and again that the Meytzav purpose is to give the school the genuine situation. It is vital for it to be an integral part of school life, to assimilate in the current learning organization and there is no need to disturb the routine and to put pressure on the students or on the staff.

There have been cases in which the head teacher has not informed the teachers or the heads of departments – please inform the schools educational staff about all the

details so they will be able to arrange for it and so total cooperation will be achieved on their behalf and an exact as possible portrait will be received.

Meytzav includes:

1. Attitude questionnaire for students between the 4th grade and 6th grade, which mainly asks about their attitude to the learning surroundings and school environment.
2. Phone interviews with teachers and heads, which includes questions about the action plan, ways of teaching and ways of evaluating, plans and initiatives, professional development, learning surroundings and more.
3. External exams at the 5th and 8th grade including fundamental subjects: mother-tongue, Math, Science and Technology, and English.

An external professional body formulated the exams. At the time of the exam there will be an external inspector apart of the class teacher. Each exam will last for 90 minutes. External inspectors will check the exams.

The head of the evaluation department is signed.

The timetable for the exams is detailed.

Appendix no. 4: The four case studies initial information

School G

Head teacher's period of service	Location	Being part of the external evaluation project since	No. of Students	No. of Teachers	No. of classes	Students' origin	Socio-economic background	Readiness to accept the external evaluation	School's capacity to improve level – as defined by the head teacher 2001
19 The school is 41 years old	A city	2000	358	24. During the last couple of years the number is stable.	12+1 special needs	Many new immigrants. Constantly absorbing new immigrants.	9 (out of 10) very low	1 (ready)	High
Special notes	School's location was temporary, when I have started the research. Due to that students have left. On Sep 2003 the school has moved to its new location.								

School M

Head teacher's period of service	Location	Being part of the external evaluation project since	No. of Students	No. of Teachers	No. of classes	Students' origin	Socio-economic background	Readiness to accept the external evaluation	School's capacity to improve level – as defined by the head teacher 2001
5 years of headship The school is 73 year old	A rural area	1999	900	50 teachers + 30 mentors. There was a turnover of 50% in the last five years.	28	Coming from 22 settlements which are located in the near-by area.	3 high	2 (not – ready)	Low
Special notes	About 50 new students join the school each year. Mostly new habitants at their settlements. Their origin is from two kinds of settlements: well established ones and poor ones. Each of the three SMT members is in charge of two grades.								

School S

Head teacher's period of service	Location	Being part of the external evaluation project since	No. of Students	No. of Teachers	No. of classes	Students' origin	Socio-economic background	Readiness to accept the external evaluation	School's capacity to improve level – as defined by the head teacher 2001
8 years of headship of the first interviewed head teacher. First year of service for the second head teacher. The school is 47 years old.	A city	2000	418	27 teachers. Quite stable neither young nor veteran; average years of service.	14	From the school's neighbourhood	6 Medium	1 (ready)	High
Special notes	After the first year of the research the head teacher has left. Her deputy head had taken over the headship.								

School H

Head teacher's period of service	Location	Being part of the external evaluation project since	No. of Students	No. of Teachers	No. of classes	Students' origin	Socio-economic background	Readiness to accept the external evaluation	School's capacity to improve level – as defined by the head teacher 2001
5 years of headship. The school is 5 years old.	A city	2000	650	35 – Stable staff. Some of them work between 1–5 years in the educational system others between 15–20 years.	18	A growing school in a new neighbourhood	6 Medium	2 (not – ready)	Low
Special notes	Being a growing school at the beginning they absorbed 200 students each year. Recently 80–100 new students are absorbed each year. 30% of the students are new immigrants. About 5% are single-parent families.								

Appendix no. 5 First questionnaire for head teachers

Dear Head teacher,

My name is Irit Diamant. I am studying for a PhD degree at the University of Bath, England. The aim of the research is to check the extent to which evaluation's reports contributes to processes of school improvement.

Hereafter is a preliminary questionnaire with the aim of sampling several schools for the research.

The questionnaire is asking for your attitudes and information about processes at school site.

The data gathered by the questionnaire will be used solely for research purposes.

Please return the filled questionnaire to the address as specified bellow.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Irit Diamant

School's name:

Head teacher's name:

The school participates in 'Meytzav' for ____ years.

1. Draw an X in the space which describes in the best way the attitude of your teachers for launching '**Meytzav**' evaluation scheme at your school:

- ☐ With objection
- ☐ With low readiness
- ☐ With a feeling of 'no choice'
- ☐ With high readiness
- ☐ With enthusiasm

2. Indicate the frequency in which the following processes of staff development occurs at your school:

	Several times in a week	Once a week	Once at fortnight	Once a month	Rarely than that	Not existing
INSET						
Instruction at school's site by external instructor						
Instruction at school's site by internal instructor						

If there is instruction whether internal or external please indicate the number of instructors taking part in it:

Number of external instructors _____

Number of internal instructors _____

3. Specify your opinion, please, of the following sentences. Tick the right box ranging from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly Disagree'.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree to an extent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers' professional development courses (outside school) improve teachers' ways of instruction.					
Teachers' professional development courses (outside school) improve students' ways of learning.					
Teachers' professional development courses (outside school) influence students' achievements.					
INSET is much influential on schooling processes than courses taking place outside of school.					
Receiving the evaluation report of 'Meytzav' made a difference in staff professional skills.					
Outside instructors have huge influence on what is happening at school.					
Inside instructors have huge influence on what is happening at school.					

Thank you again for your cooperation.

Appendix no. 6: Head teacher semi-structured interview questions:

Please describe to me your school and staff:

No. of students

No. of teachers

Staff turnover

Please tell me your own reaction and your staff's reaction, when you got the first evaluation report.

Describe the steps you have taken to disseminate the report's finding.

Probe: (has it changed over the years?)

In your opinion to what extent are the report's findings applicable in your school?

To what extent do the report's findings serve as a basis for the action plan?

Who, in the school, initiates the process of defining the action plan? Who develops it?

Who is responsible for its implementation? How do you monitor this implementation?

If there were changes over the years, in the report's results, what were the causes for them?

In what way, if at all, has the evaluation report improved the school's work?

What benefits can you specify regarding the evaluation procedures?

What drawbacks can you specify regarding the project's evaluation procedures?

Appendix no. 7: Interviews

Teacher's interview:

I intend to interview one teacher of each grade and all members of the senior management team. The head teacher will be interviewed the second time, when I have the information of the following interviews. Some of the questions refer to the head teacher.

Some of the pilot interviewee will be asked about their response to the questionnaire.

I will start by some general questions:

- What do you know about the report? Its main focuses? What is its purpose? What is your opinion of the report? Why?
- To what extent, in what way and at what stage did you become acquainted with the information in the report?

Following are questions regarding the use of the report:

- To what extent do you use the evaluation report in defining your action plan?
- In what way do you use the evaluation report in defining your action plan?
- 'What organisational policies, structures and processes have you put in place to implement the action plan?' (The idea here is to check knowledge utilization and the extent of constant self-evaluation)
- If there are, are you satisfied with these procedures? Why?
- What factors in school help you implement the report, and in what way?
- What factors in school constrain it, and why?
- What factors outside the school help you implement the report and why?

- What factors outside the school constrain you from implementing it and why?

I would like to ask you some questions regarding the influence of the report on school life.

- In what way has the evaluation report influenced the school? (Professionally, practically , emotionally, influence on relationships)
- What parts of the report are most applicable for you? Why? What parts have the strongest influence on you? In what way? What parts have the strongest influence on other teachers? Why?

The following questions are asking for your opinion of the evaluation procedure and its result – the report:

- Provided that you used the information of the report, do you think that this use has improved schooling in your school? In what way?
- To what extent is the Meyzav evaluation report effective? (Contributes to school daily life, contextually fit, you can easily use the findings with your students, the information of the report is of high value for you and the ways of using the findings with your students are clear to you)
- Would you please define “teacher professionalism”. What is a ‘professional’ teacher?
- Do you think that the information provided in the report has improved teachers’ professionalism in school? In what way?

The following questions asking for your general opinion of the process and the optimal conditions for it to succeed:

- To what extent do you think that evaluation report can promote improvement in your school's working processes?
- What conditions should be at school so that the above can happen?
- What characteristics should the report have for the same purpose? Examples.
Probe: Does Meyzav report have those characteristics?
- What do you think it means for a school to have capacity for organizational learning? What characteristics are involved?
- Provided you have used the information of the report, do you think that its use has improved school's internal capacity? In what way?
- (General question): What is this school like to work in as a teacher?

Senior staff management – first interview

We will start by some general question regarding the evaluation procedure and the information of the report:

- What do you know about the report? Its main focuses? What is its purpose? What is your opinion of the report?
- How do the results of the evaluation procedure look like this current year?
- What did you think about the results?
- Generally speaking, is the report easy to understand? Why do you think it is, or it is not? Is the information useful? In what way?
- How did teachers respond to the information in the report?
- Was it different from previous years? If yes, in what way? What do you think the reasons are?
- How do you manage information in the report that contradicts other information you have on your school?

We will turn now to some questions regarding the point where the report ‘meets’ the school:

- Please describe to me the report dissemination procedure.
- How was the data handled after dissemination in school? Who is involved? To what extent?
- What kinds of support structures are there in the school and outside the school to make the implementation of the report’s findings possible?
- What factors in school help you implement the report, and in what way?
- What factors in school constrain it, and why?

- What factors outside the school help you implement the report and why?
- What factors outside the school constrain you from implementing it and why?
- How do you make the data provided by the report relevant to your context, if needed?
- Do you involve anyone else – internal or external – in discussing how the report will be used?
- Are any incentives provided for staff to implement the report's findings? If there are can you describe them to me? (Pressure and support)
- Do you use the report differently now than you did when you first got it? In what way? Why?
- Have you got any idea about similar procedures in other schools? Have you learnt anything from other contexts?

I would like to ask you some questions about school's staff development:

- Who chooses what staff members learn outside the school? (Does the individual teacher choose what to study? Is it the head teacher's initiative? Is there a plan for staff development for the long run?)
- In what way, if at all, does individual teacher learning outside the school influence schooling?
- Are there structures in school to facilitate knowledge transformation and knowledge sharing? What structures and procedures are used in school to try and define contextual knowledge?
- To what extent are teachers motivated to study?

To conclude:

- What changes, if at all, in your school's culture can you point out from the first time you got Meytzav's report and implement its findings?

Any comments.

Head teacher – second interview

We will start by some general question regarding the evaluation procedure and the information of the report:

- How the results of the evaluation procedure look like this current year?
- What did you think about it?
- How did teachers respond to the information of the report?
- Was it different from previous years? If yes, in what way? What did you think the reasons are?
- How do you manage report's information that is contradictory to the information you have on your school?

We will turn now to some questions regarding the point where the report 'meets' the school:

- Please describe to me the report dissemination procedure.
- How is the data handled after dissemination in school? Who is involved? To what extent?
- What kinds of support structures are there in the school and outside the school to make the implementation of the report's findings possible? How do you make the data provided by the report relevant to your context?
- Did you involve anyone else – internal or external – in discussing how the report will be used?
- Are there any incentives for implementation? Can you please describe them to me?
- Do you use the report differently now than you did when you first got it? In what way? Why?

- Have you got any idea about similar procedures in other schools? Have you learnt anything from other contexts?

I would like to ask you some questions about school's staff development:

- What is the origin for staff members' learning outside the school? (Does the individual teacher choose what to study? Is it the head teacher's initiative? Is there a plan for staff development for the long run?)
- In what way does individual teacher learning outside the school influence schooling?
- Are there structures in school to make knowledge transformation and knowledge sharing? What structures and procedures are used in school to try and define contextual knowledge?
- To what extent are teachers motivated to study?

To conclude:

- What changes, if at all, in your school's culture can you point out from the first time you got Meytzav's report and implement its findings?

Any comments.

Appendix no. 8: Teacher's pilot questionnaire

Dear teacher

The following questionnaire is asking for your attitudes and opinions about processes that take place at your school.

In the first part you are asked to refer generally to your school. At the second part you are asked to refer to Meytzav's evaluation and its report.

In recent year Meyzav's evaluation has taken the place of Madarom's evaluation procedure. The questionnaire, however, refers to both without distinction.

Please read the statements in the questionnaire carefully and decide which response fits your opinion the best. Write your answer on the page.

Thank you for your co operation,

Irit Diamant

A. Four sentences follow. Circle the one which describes in the most appropriate way your approach to Meytzav's evaluation and its report, **in the first year you received it in school.**

1. It's interesting to know how we look to an outsider.
2. It's a waste of time. An external body cannot check what really happens in school.
3. At last we have the opportunity to get professional information regarding what we do. It might serve us in future.
4. Why do they need to follow us? They want to "catch" us.

B. Circle the sentence, which describes in the most appropriate way your approach to Meytzav evaluation and its report **now**:

1. It's interesting to know how we look to an outsider.
2. It's a waste of time. An external body cannot check what really happens in school.
3. At last we have the opportunity to get professional information regarding what we do. It might serve us in future.
4. Why do they need to follow us? They want to "catch" us.

C. The following sentences refer to Meytzav's evaluation, its report and its influence on your work and on schooling at your school. Please refer to each sentence by relating to the extent you agree with it, by using the following scale:

4 – strongly agree	3 – agree	2 – slightly agree	-1 – disagree
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1	I am aware of the fact that there is an evaluation's report	4	3	2	1
2	I know all the details of the evaluation's report	4	3	2	1
3	I took part in analysing the report	4	3	2	1
4	The findings of the report influence my way of teaching	4	3	2	1
5	The findings of the report influence the methods of evaluation that I use in class.	4	3	2	1

6	The findings of the report influence the school's curriculum	4	3	2	1
7	The findings of the report influence the students' learning	4	3	2	1
8	The report influences the role distribution at school	4	3	2	1
9	The report's findings serve mainly for instrumental changes, like: more exams, role distribution etc.	4	3	2	1
10	The evaluation procedure and the report's findings have changed the school's culture	4	3	2	1
11	The findings of the report have changed my educational attitudes.	4	3	2	1
12	The findings of the report have improved school's environment	4	3	2	1
13	The report's findings are compatible with the reality I know	4	3	2	1
14	Dissemination of the report findings was done effectively	4	3	2	1
15	The information in the report is very significant	4	3	2	1
16	The information in the report is presented in an effective and usable manner.	4	3	2	1
17	The information in the report is presented in a usable manner.				
18	The information of the report is relevant to school's needs.	4	3	2	1
19	The information presented in the report is formulated in clear and simple terms	4	3	2	1
20	I participated in the discussion of how to implement the report's findings.	4	3	2	1
21	I took part in the discussion of how the school should prepare itself to Meyzav evaluation procedure.	4	3	2	1
22	I was aware to the fact that the school gets an evaluation report from the first year of conducting this procedure.	4	3	2	1
23	The school gets the report for some years now. Throughout all the years I took part in discussing it beforehand and following its arrival to school.	4	3	2	1
24	The report had influence on my work from the first year of getting it.	4	3	2	1

Please write any comments or clarification

here: _____

Has there been any influence on schooling as a result of the evaluation report?

Yes/No

If the answer is Yes, please describe one key action that has been taken as a result of this report.

D. The following sentences describe a school, its environment and teachers' attitudes.

Please indicate the extent to which these sentences describe **your own school**. Please refer to each sentence by using the following scale:

4 – strongly agree	3 – agree	2 – slightly agree	-1 – disagree
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1	There is a feeling of cohesiveness among the teachers	4	3	2	1
2	Anyone can express her/his opinion freely	4	3	2	1
3	Everyone's opinion is taken into consideration before decisions are made	4	3	2	1
5	All initiatives are welcomed	4	3	2	1
6	Every teacher is highly involved in processes at the school	4	3	2	1
7	Teachers at the school feel that what is happening at school is their business	4	3	2	1
8	A feeling of commitment exists among staff members	4	3	2	1
9	I am mainly interested in what is happening in my own class. The whole school is not my real interest.	4	3	2	1

10	All teachers are aware of school priorities.	4	3	2	1
11	Most teachers agree with the way schools' priorities were sorted out.	4	3	2	1
12	Teachers took part in deciding on school priorities.	4	3	2	1
13	A problem solving procedure is carried out before any action is taken.	4	3	2	1
14	Everybody knows who is in charge of what	4	3	2	1
15	Learning of adults and of children at school is valued.	4	3	2	1
17	There is an environment pushing for high performance.	4	3	2	1
18	I believe that any child can succeed.	4	3	2	1
19	We have opportunities to clarify our own attitudes, beliefs and values.	4	3	2	1
20	I have opportunities to share my new knowledge.	4	3	2	1
21	There are opportunities to share data from Meytzav reports.	4	3	2	1
22	The school's norms are clear to all	4	3	2	1
23	Communication between all staff members is good	4	3	2	1
24	There is an environment of openness	4	3	2	1
25	Generally, change excites me.	4	3	2	1
26	Meyzav aims are compatible with my own educational beliefs.	4	3	2	1
27	In my daily life at school I feel supported	4	3	2	1
28	The school's staff is able to deal with desirable changes.	4	3	2	1
29	There is constant self-evaluation at school.	4	3	2	1
30	There is constant change at the school.	4	3	2	1
31	The national curriculum affects schooling.	4	3	2	1
32	The head teacher set the agenda in our school.	4	3	2	1
33	Current affairs affect schooling.	4	3	2	1
34	Meyzav's report affects schooling.	4	3	2	1

F. The following are sentences that describe staff development and learning. Please indicate the extent to which these sentences describe **your own school**. Please refer to each sentence by using the following scale:

4 – strongly agree	3 – agree	2 – slightly agree	-1 – disagree
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1	Teachers can influence the topics of INSET.	4	3	2	1
2	The courses I take outside or in school enlarge my personal knowledge	4	3	2	1
3	The courses I take outside or in school enhance my practical knowledge	4	3	2	1
4	The courses I take outside or in school are valuable	4	3	2	1
5	I prefer to study in small groups	4	3	2	1
6	I prefer to study in other institutes than in school	4	3	2	1
7	The topics chosen for the INSET are pertinent to my needs	4	3	2	1
8	The INSET gives us opportunities to reflect on our daily life in school	4	3	2	1

Thank you again for your co-operation.

Appendix no. 9 – A scheme for the second observation

Points for observation:

Pre observation: The topic of the meeting, its origin/initiator, its purposes, who is in charge of conducting it? Who will be influenced by its process and outcomes?

Who attends? Why? Where does it take place? The time frame.

The meeting, observation:

Levels of involvement,

Leadership styles and who is taking the lead?

What serves as a basic data for organisational processes?

Organisational processes: knowledge origin and knowledge utilization, knowledge generation.

School culture parameters such as: Values, norms, and customs. Micro politics.

Facilitative structures, promoting and hindering elements.

Critical incidents – events that took place during the meeting and had influenced its direction.

I see and hear	I think (during the meeting)	I think (right after the meeting)

Appendix no. 10 – Teacher's questionnaire last version

Dear teacher

The following questionnaire is a part of the data collection for my doctoral research at the University of Bath, England. My aim is to check the extent to which schools use external evaluation reports.

Recently, Meyzav's evaluation has taken the place of Meytzav's evaluation procedure. The questionnaire, however, refers to both without distinction.

The questionnaire is about teachers' perceptions of the school they work in, the school's procedures and teachers' attitude to their professional development. The questionnaire has three parts. The first one refers to your school generally. In the second part you are asked to refer to the report produced as a result of Meytzav evaluation procedure. In the third part you are asked to refer to some statements describing your attitudes about your school and professional development.

Please read the statements in the questionnaire carefully and decide which response fits your opinion the best. There is no 'right' answer; any answer may describe the situation as you see it.

Your responses to the questionnaire will be entirely anonymous; your answers will be used solely for research purposes.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Irit Diamant.

First part

The following sentences describe a school's culture. Please indicate the extent to which these sentences fit **your own school's culture**. Please refer to each sentence by using the following scale:

4 –fits very well		3 – fits		2 – slightly fits		1 – doesn't fit	
1	There is a feeling of “togetherness” in this school.	4	3	2	1		
2	Anyone can express her/his opinion freely.	4	3	2	1		
3	There is little space for teachers' initiative.	4	3	2	1		
4	There is high involvement of all teachers.	4	3	2	1		
5	There are opportunities for teachers to share their new knowledge.	4	3	2	1		
6	All teachers are aware of school priorities.	4	3	2	1		
7	Individual teachers have no influence on decision-making.	4	3	2	1		
8	There is an environment of openness.	4	3	2	1		
9	All initiatives are welcomed.	4	3	2	1		
10	Teachers at school feel that what is happening there is none of their own business.	4	3	2	1		
11	Teachers are constantly trying to improve this school.	4	3	2	1		
12	The national curriculum crucially affects schooling.	4	3	2	1		
13	Teachers' and students' high performances are not praised.	4	3	2	1		
14	INSET gives us the opportunity to examine our daily life.	4	3	2	1		
15	Most teachers agree with schools' priorities.	4	3	2	1		
16	There are not enough opportunities at school to clarify our own attitudes, beliefs and values.	4	3	2	1		
17	If there are issues to deal with, a problem solving procedure is carried out.	4	3	2	1		
18	People's roles and responsibilities at school are not clear enough.	4	3	2	1		
19	A feeling of commitment is shared among all.	4	3	2	1		
20	Learning of all (children and adults) is valued.	4	3	2	1		
21	There is a mutually favourable atmosphere among the teachers	4	3	2	1		
22	Teachers take part in defining the school's priorities.	4	3	2	1		
23	The evaluation report has a minimal impact on schooling.	4	3	2	1		
24	There are opportunities in school to share the information of the	4	3	2	1		

	evaluation report.				
25	School's norms are clear to all; teachers understand what is expected of them.	4	3	2	1
26	The school is lacking mechanisms that allow the flow of information.	4	3	2	1
27	Teachers can influence the content of INSET.	4	3	2	1
28	INSET doesn't have a high value.	4	3	2	1

Second part

A. The evaluation report contains several parts. Please use the following scale to indicate the extent to which the different parts are familiar to you:

4 – fully familiar	3 – familiar	2 – superficially familiar	1 – are not familiar
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The part in the report		The extent of its familiarity to you			
1	School's action plan	4	3	2	1
2	Learning setting characteristics	4	3	2	1
3	School's environment	4	3	2	1
4	Students' achievements and teachers' expectations	4	3	2	1
5	Professional development and the school as a working space	4	3	2	1

B. The following sentences refer to Meyzav evaluation report, the way you accepted it in school, its influence on your work and on schooling. Please refer to each sentence by relating to the extent to which it fits the reality you know at your school, by using the following scale:

4 – fits very well		3 – fits	2 – slightly fits	1 – doesn't fit			
1	The findings of the evaluation report encompass all areas of school activity.	4	3	2	1		
2	The report findings do not influence my way of teaching.	4	3	2	1		
3	As a result of the evaluation procedure and its report we get recognition, which otherwise we couldn't get.	4	3	2	1		
4	I took part in analysing the report.	4	3	2	1		
5	The findings of the report have harmed the school environment.	4	3	2	1		
6	The dissemination of the report findings was done in the best possible way.	4	3	2	1		
7	We didn't need the evaluation report to realize that in our school a serious work is being done.	4	3	2	1		
8	I never took part in the consultation regarding the report findings.	4	3	2	1		
9	The report findings have affected the school's curriculum.	4	3	2	1		
10	We have to refer to the report, as do all the other schools in the area.	4	3	2	1		
11	The report's findings affected my work from the first year we got involved in this project.	4	3	2	1		
12	The report's findings have not affected the organisational structure of the school.	4	3	2	1		
13	Our reference to the report findings is important because it is one of the ways to improve.	4	3	2	1		
14	One can learn from the information in the report.	4	3	2	1		
15	The findings of the report are clearly presented.	4	3	2	1		
16	The report findings have changed some of my educational attitudes.	4	3	2	1		

17	The report findings do not influence the methods I use to evaluate and assess my class.	4	3	2	1
18	The information in the report is compatible with this school's reality as I see it.	4	3	2	1
19	The information in the report is presented in a usable manner.	4	3	2	1
20	The way the findings of the report were disseminated made it easy to be implemented.	4	3	2	1
21	As a result of the external evaluation there has been an extended follow up on students' achievements.	4	3	2	1
22	The report's main aim is to let us realize that everything we do is controlled from outside.	4	3	2	1
23	I took part in the discussion of how the school should prepare itself for the Meyzav evaluation procedure.	4	3	2	1
24	The report's findings have influenced decision making in school.	4	3	2	1
25	The report told me very little that I did not already know.	4	3	2	1
26	The information in the report is relevant to school's needs.	4	3	2	1
27	This current year I didn't take part in the consultation regarding the implementation of the report findings.	4	3	2	1
28	From the first year we got the report I knew about it.	4	3	2	1
29	Our reference to the report findings is important because consequently we get support from Meytzav.	4	3	2	1
30	The information in the report is presented in unclear terms.	4	3	2	1
31	Being aware of the fact that our school is undergoing an evaluation procedure improves our work.	4	3	2	1

- Please add any remarks or clarifications regarding the information in the table:

- Have any steps been taken as a result of the evaluation report? Yes/No
- If the answer is Yes, please describe a specific action that has been taken as a result of this report.

Fourth part

In the following sentences an attitude towards teaching and learning at school is described. Please indicate the extent to which these sentences describe **your own attitudes**. Please refer to each sentence by using the following scale:

4 – strongly agree	3 – agree	2 – slightly agree	–1 – disagree
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1	What happens in my class is more important to me than what happens in school.	4	3	2	1
2	Courses (inside and outside of the school) enlarge my personal knowledge.	4	3	2	1
3	No matter what I do there are students who cannot succeed	4	3	2	1
4	Courses (inside and outside of the school) enhance my practical knowledge.	4	3	2	1
5	I see change in schooling as a positive matter.	4	3	2	1
6	I prefer to study in small groups.	4	3	2	1
7	Meytzav's aims are compatible to my own educational attitudes.	4	3	2	1
8	I prefer to study in other institutes than in school.	4	3	2	1
9	I feel supported by my colleagues in the daily life in school.	4	3	2	1
10	The topics chosen for the INSET are pertinent to my needs.	4	3	2	1
11	We, as a team, can confront any needed changes.	4	3	2	1

Your role in school_____ Period of service as a teacher_____

Period of service in this school_____

Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix no. 11: SMTs' characteristics

	No. of SMT members	Special characteristics	Responsibilities	Structures and routines
School G: a small school: 358 students	3 + 5 role holders	Similarity between their educational philosophy and that of the head teacher. The place of each member on the SMT is temporary and they are frequently replaced. Teachers trust them as doing a 'good job'.	Each one of the three was in charge of one of the school's aims: – improving literacy – promoting a safe climate – enhancing inquiry skills – changing teaching practices from whole-class work to work in small groups based on a dialogue with students (the last being the head teacher's responsibility). Other role holders were responsible for maths, science, computer studies, schools trips, and the school's social events.	Structures of SMT-teachers' work were mentioned only within the frame of dissemination of the external reports' findings. Apart from that they mainly worked as a group, including the head teacher (having one of the responsibilities mentioned before).
School M: a big school: 900 students	3 (also known as deputy heads) +2 role holders	Frequently mentioned by the head teacher as providing a back-up for her ideas.	Sharing decisions with the head teacher regarding school's priorities, its aims, and methods of implementation. Disseminating the above among other staff members, each one being in charge of two grade levels. Two more role holders were responsible to further develop the school's curriculum in maths and literacy.	Meet once a week with the head teacher, and every fortnight for 45 minutes with the group of teachers with the aim of monitoring the implementation of the school's curriculum by reading class profiles once in a month or every fortnight.
School H: quite big: 650 students	3 + 3	Had clear and defined responsibilities – the head teacher perceived them as 'a support system' for teachers.	Of the three, each is in charge of two grade levels, having one more responsibility: pedagogical coordinator, school's trips, school's social events. Each of the other three was responsible for one of the subject areas at the school – maths, science, and literacy. Acted as facilitators, setting up and directing meetings to define and establish aims, and follow up implementation.	Each presented the head teacher with a monthly report. They all met three times a year. Meeting the group of teachers for an hour (45 minutes) weekly.
School S – quite small: 418 students	4	Valued and respected by the head teacher as well as by the teachers. Recently the head teacher initiated a very open new role distribution; open to any creative idea.	Two were in charge of three grade levels each; the other two were in charge of maths and language studies. Monitoring students' progress with class teachers, and initiating INSET for teachers.	Meeting the group of teachers every fortnight. In charge of fortnightly INSET.